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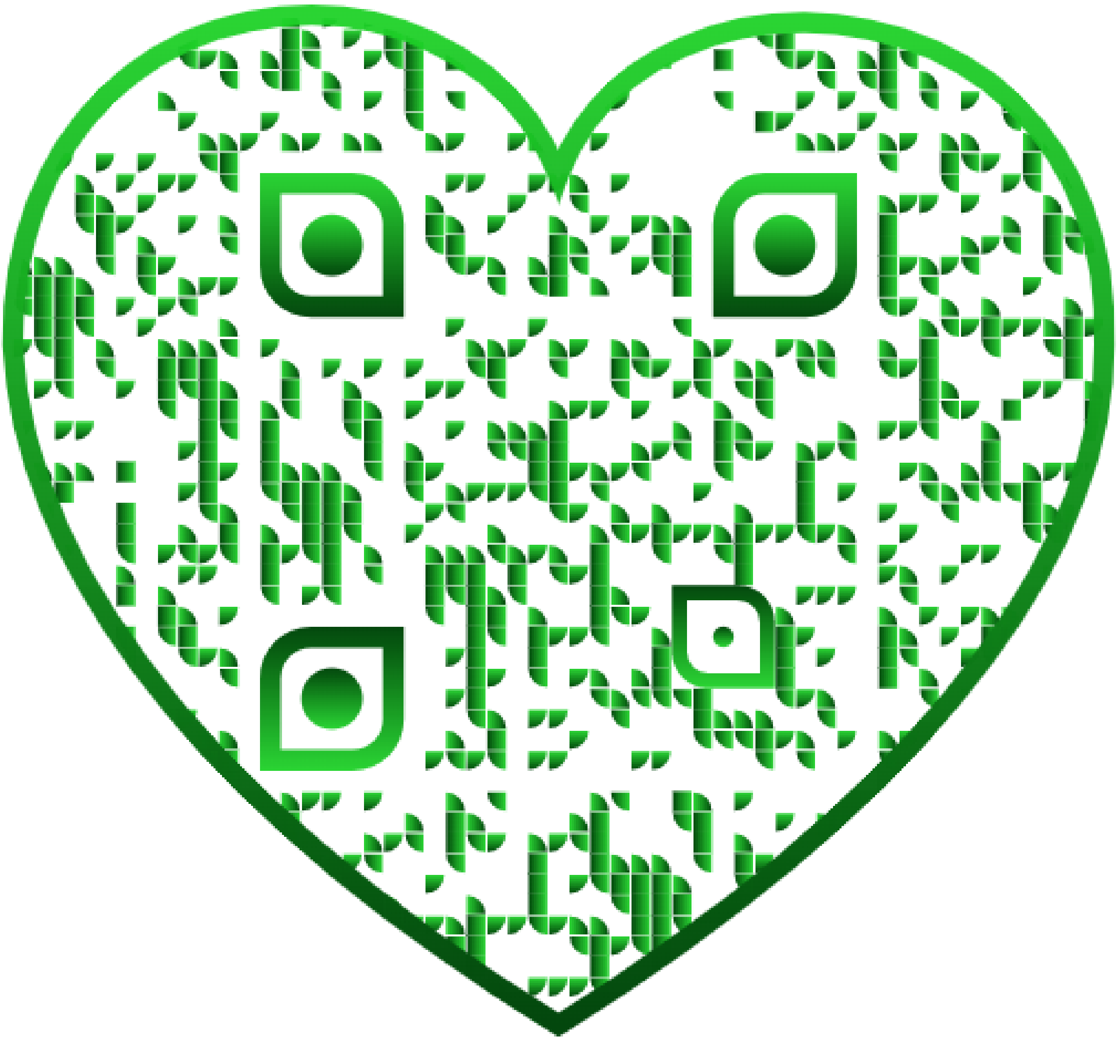

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COMMENT

DIESEL CARS STILL HAVE A ROLE TO PLAY IN 2025

The decline of diesel continues apace. Just 5.7% of new cars sold so far this year are fuelled from the black pump and, in response, manufacturers continue to trim them from their line-ups. Not so long ago, we were spoiled for choice for premium-badged diesels; in 2025, it's an effort to round up three.

But Stephen Dobie gallantly undertook that quest for what is intended as a diesel celebration (p44) – because the modern, efficient diesel engine is still an important piece of today's motoring landscape. For drivers routinely making long trips outside of urban areas, diesels offer unrivalled efficiency and are far cleaner than many perceive.

Because of the still-shocking Volkswagen Dieselgate scandal, many people now firmly believe diesel engines are socially irresponsible. That's understandable, and the industry only has itself to blame. But as I argued in this space last week when writing about EV battery life, people should choose the best car for their needs based on facts, not assumptions.

That doesn't mean everyone should rush out and buy a diesel; the driving habits of most buyers are more suited to petrol, hybrid or electric power. But, at least until PHEV and EV tech improves further, diesel remains a compelling option for some buyers. Let's hope they still have that choice in the future.

James Attwood, associate editor
james.attwood@haymarket.com

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Up close and personal

Join Jonathan Bryce as he details the design secrets of the new Fiat Grande Panda – including many Easter eggs...

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On our Instagram channel, Felix Page reveals seven key features that let you know this new Smart #5 is a bonkers Brabus.

Dacia CEO Denis Le Vot

Value brand is set to enter a new era and its boss tells Mark Tisshaw about its daring five-year plan on our Autocar Meets podcast.

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"The ship is so big that a Suzuki Carry is used if quick transport is needed inside it" p54

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GOT A STORY Email our news editor
will.rimell@haymarket.com

NEW AUDI RS6 TO KEEP V8 AS 730BHP PHEV ALONGSIDE EV

Both hybrid and electric performance A6s are being readied for 2026

The next Audi RS6 will be completely electrified for its fifth generation in 2026, when it will arrive with both a plug-in hybrid V8 powertrain and a fully electric one – a first for Audi Sport.

Set to rival both the electric BMW i5 M60 and the PHEV BMW M5, the new RS6 will be the most powerful version yet, producing as much as 730bhp in combustion-engined form.

And for the first time since 2010, the RS6 will offer a choice of estate and saloon bodystyles.

The decision to continue offering a combustion-engined RS6 comes two years after Audi Sport confirmed its intention to take the RS6 fully electric. Slower than anticipated EV sales in important markets prompted a revision of that plan, with Audi now instead seeking to extend the life cycles of key ICE models well into the next decade.

The dual-powertrain approach is underpinned by a dual-platform strategy. The electric RS6 E-tron sits on the Volkswagen Group's Premium Platform Electric (PPE). Meanwhile, the combustion-engined RS6 adopts the Premium Platform Combustion (PPC) – an evolution of the MLB architecture used by the current RS6, which was introduced in 2019.

Details remain scarce, but the combustion-engined RS6 is understood to continue with an updated version of the Porsche-developed twin-turbocharged 4.0-litre V8 petrol engine used by its predecessor. But in order to meet stricter Euro 7 emissions legislation, it is expected to be combined with a plug-in hybrid system that incorporates a gearbox-mounted electric motor and a lithium ion battery – a set-up already deployed in various Porsche and Bentley models.

Recent sightings of test vehicles appear to confirm this development, with mules spotted wearing smaller, more inboard tailpipes closely resembling those fitted to the Porsche Cayenne Turbo E-Hybrid. A 'high voltage' sticker has also been seen on these prototypes.

Using this set-up also means a bump in power over the existing RS6's 621bhp and 627lb ft. For example, in the most

SPY SHOT

Mules are testing 4.0-litre V8 PHEV system; styling is aggressive

SPY SHOT

Tailpipes indicate Porsche-based tech; estate and saloon due

WHICH RS6 WILL BE THE ONE TO HAVE? MATT PRIOR

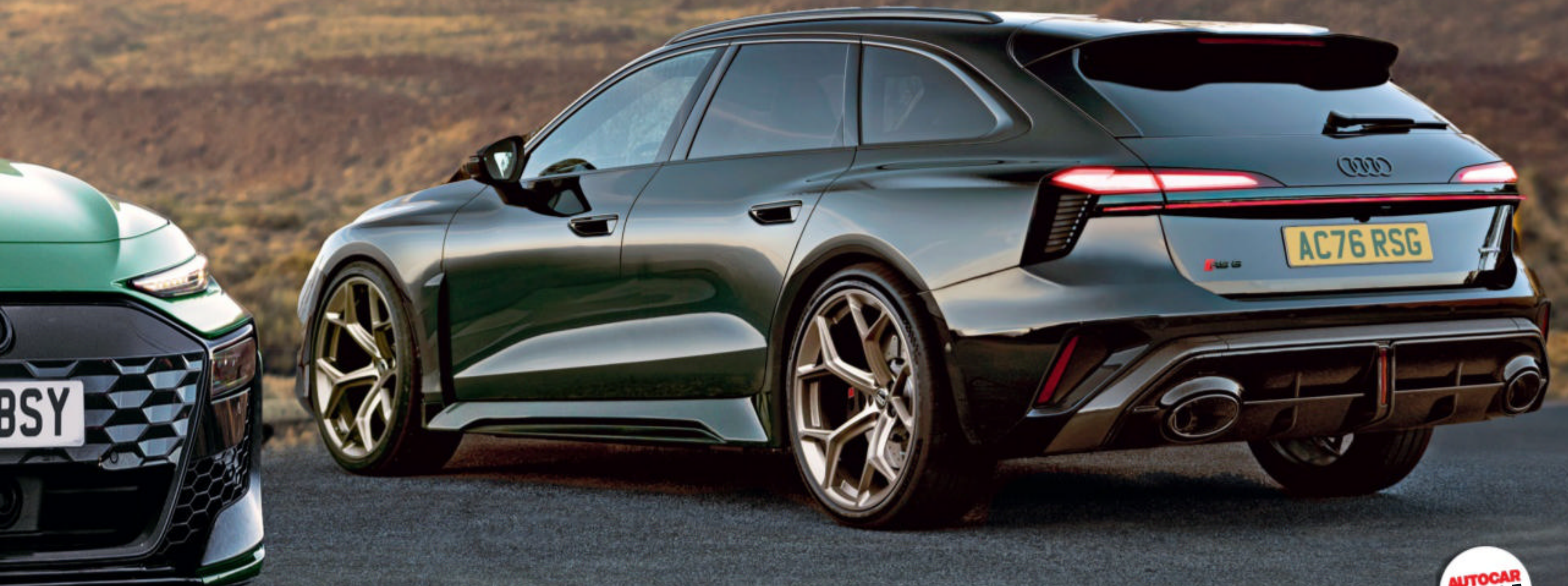
The BMW i5-versus-M5 comparison is the interesting one when it comes to the new RS6 duo.

The latest M5 is technologically supremely advanced and retains a woofling V8 in its plug-in hybrid system, but in doing everything, it's notably heavier than its all-electric counterpart.

The i5 has instant and incredibly smooth throttle response, and its stability and handling control systems could respond faster than mechanical systems too.

In daily driving, I prefer the i5 to the M5 – the difference being that if I commuted 300 miles on an autobahn once or twice a week, I would pick the hybrid every time.

It might be best to be in a position to avoid the comparison, though: make the hybrid RS6 as exciting as we know a car with an engine can be while making the electric variant wilfully different in the way it handles, in the way that the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N is a new type of performance car.



> **"Audi will give the RS6 E-tron a trick gearbox and pump sound into its cabin"**

potent Cayenne, the PHEV arrangement delivers a combined 730bhp and 701lb ft of torque.

An even more powerful version of this PHEV powertrain is used in the facelifted Porsche Panamera Turbo S E-Hybrid, where it develops 771bhp and 738lb ft. That provides the four-wheel-drive luxury liftback with an official 0-62mph time of 2.9sec and a 202mph top speed – figures that Audi Sport will be aiming to emulate with the new RS6.

The move to develop the V8 for the RS6 is reinforced by fellow Volkswagen Group brand Porsche, which announced last year that the next-generation Cayenne and other models will retain combustion engines into the future, with investment aimed at "improving the efficiency of the V8 developed by Porsche and built at the Zuffenhausen engine plant".

The electric RS6 E-tron, meanwhile, is confirmed to run a sophisticated dual-motor, four-wheel-drive powertrain that builds on the one already destined for the S6 E-tron.

In that model (launched alongside the standard A6 E-tron earlier this year), the system develops 543bhp and 631lb ft.

Insiders at Audi Sport have suggested to Autocar that power will be ramped up to somewhere closer to 670bhp and 701lb ft.

One source said: "It's unlikely to reach as far as the RS E-tron GT [Audi Sport's most powerful model, at 912bhp], but there will be a solid increase over and above the S6 E-tron as part of the differentiation measures."

Like some other performance EVs, such as the Hyundai Ioniq 5 N, Audi will also give the RS6 E-tron a trick gearbox and pump sound into the cabin to increase driver engagement.

Audi Sport engineers are also claimed to be developing a progressive torque curve.

The EV will use the same 94.8kWh (usable) battery as the A6 E-tron but, given its performance positioning, it isn't expected to achieve the same range as the standard saloon (463 miles) or Avant estate (437 miles).

Both the electric and combustion-engined RS6s will be visually more aggressive than their standard stablemates, with a more angular design, wider arches and, at the rear, a deep diffuser and larger roof-mounted spoiler.

For the PHEV, notably larger air intakes and centrally positioned oval tailpipes will be added. Meanwhile, the EV will grow to 4900mm in length, to match its PHEV V8 sibling.

Despite the adoption of lightweight materials such as aluminium and composites, the extra hybrid hardware will add mass, tipping the new PHEV RS6 beyond the 2090kg of its predecessor. The electric RS6 E-tron, meanwhile, is set to exceed the 2500kg mark.

To preserve handling agility and improve comfort, Audi Sport is expected to introduce a new active suspension system similar to that of the Panamera Turbo S E-Hybrid.

Sightings of prototypes also suggest braking will be handled by large carbon-ceramic discs and 10-piston front calipers.

As with previous iterations, the new RS6 is expected to maintain a significant premium above the rest of the A6 range. For the EV, it will rise beyond its £99,300 S6 sibling, while prices for the petrol-powered car are expected to extend in the direction today's £176,975 RS6 Avant GT.

GREG KABLE

AYGO X HYBRID SETS NEW EMISSIONS BENCHMARK

Electrified city car claims tiny CO_2 output and more than 74mpg

Toyota has given the Aygo X an aggressive new look and a hybrid powertrain that is claimed to emit the least CO_2 of any non-plug-in car in Europe.

The brand's smallest and most affordable car has adopted the same 1.5-litre four-cylinder petrol-electric hybrid powertrain that is used in the larger Yaris, putting up to 114bhp through the front wheels.

This is enough to send the Aygo X from 0-62mph in less than 10sec – a significant improvement on the previous 14.9sec. And, product bosses have told Autocar, it will yield fuel efficiency in excess of 74mpg.

The existing 71bhp 1.0-litre three-pot, which traces its lineage back to the original Aygo of two decades ago, is being removed from the line-up, and the option of a manual gearbox goes with it. The Aygo X is now fitted with the Yaris's CVT-like epicyclic automatic as standard.

In addition to the much-improved performance of the hybrid, two key reasons for the older lump's removal from the line-up are the UK's zero-emission vehicle mandate and fleet CO_2 emissions targets.

The ZEV mandate contains a provision that allows car manufacturers to convert reductions in their total CO_2 outputs into de facto 'sales' of electric cars, giving them extra flexibility to meet EV sales targets.

Every 167g/km of CO_2 cut from a firm's total output in any given year can be converted into one ZEV 'sale', meaning they have to sell one less electric car to meet compliance targets – or they can sell an extra petrol, diesel or hybrid car within their limit.

This is particularly relevant for the Aygo X. It is one of Toyota's best-selling models in the UK, and the new hybrid system emits significantly less CO_2 than the previous petrol engine. It's rated at 86g/km, a reduction of 23g/km. For reference, the rival MG 3 Hybrid+ emits 100g/km.

Autocar understands that Toyota sold some 14,000 examples of the city car in the UK last year. Had those all been the new hybrid, Toyota would have been able to sell in excess of 2000 additional ICE cars while remaining within its limit.

Separately from the ZEV mandate, such a significant reduction would have given Toyota crucial leeway in its fleet emissions targets. It would have offset the total emissions of nearly 1600 GR Yarises (rated at 215g/km) or 1400 Land Cruisers (240g/km).

The uprated powertrain will, however, bring an increase in cost. Toyota has

GR SPORT BRINGS WARM HATCH APPEAL TO AYGO X

A new GR Sport trim (pictured) aims to imbue the Aygo X with more dynamic appeal, bringing with it a stiffer chassis and quicker steering. A full-fat GR model isn't planned, however. Toyota says the new hybrid powertrain's 114bhp – yielding a power-to-weight ratio similar to that of the old VW Up GTI and Fiat Panda 100HP – is sufficient to make it fun to drive.

Analogue speedo and rev counter have been swapped for digital

OFFICIAL PICTURES
AYGO X
GR

Land Cruiser is likely to stick with ICE power and a ladder-frame chassis

ROBUSTNESS KEY TO EVOLUTION OF LAND CRUISER

TOYOTA IS PRIMING an expanded Land Cruiser line-up with entry-level and luxury EVs, but the core model will remain a function-first 4x4 – and that means it's likely to stick with ICE power and a ladder-frame chassis for the foreseeable future.

Speaking to Autocar, Toyota Motor Europe boss Andrea Carlucci said "the nameplate itself and what it stands for" is of utmost importance to the Land

New Aygo X uses a 114bhp 1.5-litre hybrid powertrain

yet to confirm numbers, but product manager Cesar Romero said: “The price will increase. We’re under discussion; it’s still not final. It will be higher than today but will be lower than the B-segment Yaris.

“What we’re targeting is, especially on a monthly payment, the total cost of ownership. Fuel consumption of the vehicle will be much lower than for the current car, thanks to the hybrid powertrain. We expect the step [in overall costs] not to be so big.”

For reference, the current pure-petrol Aygo X starts at £16,485, while the Yaris’s entry point is £23,445.

Inside, the new Aygo X features a series of subtle changes. The outgoing car’s analogue speedometer and rev counter are swapped for a small digital instrument screen, and there is now a pair of USB-C ports below the climate control panel.

An infrared sensor is now mounted on the steering rack (for the EU-mandated driver attention monitoring system) and there are updated buttons on the steering wheel for the speed limit warning and lane keeping assist systems.

Toyota has also fitted additional sound deadening around the dashboard and under the bonnet, and the exhaust has been reworked to improve refinement.

Higher trim levels will get yet more soundproofing and thicker window glass.

The first examples of the new Aygo X are due in the UK early next year.

CHARLIE MARTIN

Aygo X now has more aggressive styling and improved cabin refinement

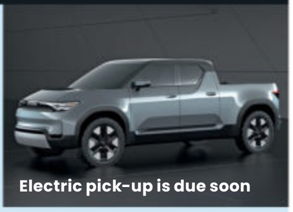
TOYOTA SET TO REVEAL TWO NEW EVs

TOYOTA IS PREPARING to launch two new electric models before the end of 2025: a counterpart to the Hilux pick-up and a blocky SUV that will sit above the bZ4X.

A teaser graphic confirming a six-model EV line-up was shown briefly at a recent brand event. The image depicted the facelifted bZ4X, estate-bodied bZ4X Touring, C-HR+ and Urban Cruiser alongside two new silhouettes.

One is a mid-sized pick-up while the other is a large SUV with a stepped roofline, roughly in line with that of the Land Cruiser Se concept that was displayed at the 2023 Tokyo motor show.

Both models will take the brand into crucial new segments: the Hilux will be one of very few electric pick-ups on sale in the UK, while a large EV SUV would provide Toyota with a rival for the Kia EV9 and Skoda’s upcoming electric seven-seater.



Electric pick-up is due soon

Toyota’s new electric SUV will sit above existing bZ4X

Cruiser. “If you don’t stay true to that mission, it is very difficult,” he continued, adding that the 4x4’s future is “one of the most difficult questions” for Toyota.

Referring to the upcoming ‘baby’ Land Cruiser and luxury range-topper (see Autocar renders, right), Carlucci said: “There will be in the future different [versions].” These have been previewed by recent concepts and will use EV-ready underpinnings rather than the core model’s.

He said that while hydrogen combustion is not currently in the plan, it could be an option for future Land Cruisers. “Whatever goes in line with our goal to reduce CO_2 footprints,” he added. “The vehicle has to be as tough as it always was. Otherwise it’s not a Land Cruiser any more.”

Key to this robustness is the ladder-frame chassis, around which there has been “a long discussion” within the company.

“We worked so much on lightening the overall frame and the structure,” said Carlucci. “We basically created a new platform, which is quite a luxury when you are a maker with so many nameplates.”

AUTOCAR IMAGE

AUTOCAR IMAGE

BURNASTON TO BUILD GR COROLLA

TOYOTA WILL BUILD the GR Corolla hot hatchback in the UK from next year in a bid to cater to massive demand in the US.

The Japanese firm is installing a new line for the Volkswagen Golf R rival at its factory in Burnaston, Derbyshire, as the Motomachi plant in Japan, where it builds its hot GR models, is at capacity.

Burnaston already produces the regular Corolla for the European market.

While Toyota hasn’t given a specific volume figure, Reuters says it will have capacity to build around 10,000 examples of the GR Corolla annually for export to the US.

The prospect of adding local production also lends weight to the possibility that the GR Corolla – currently offered in only a handful of markets, including the US and Japan – could be launched in Europe.

KIA COMMITS TO HATCHES AND SALOONS FOR EUROPE

Firm chases 'big volume' sales for new EV4 and K4 alongside SUVs

Kia is committed to launching more hatchbacks and saloons, rather than going all in on SUVs, as it prepares the European launch of ICE-powered and electric hatchbacks to rival the Volkswagen Golf and ID 3.

Speaking exclusively to Autocar, Kia executive vice-president Ted Lee said there was still "big volume" for hatchback models in Europe in particular, and he confirmed the firm would continue to offer them – and indeed launch all-new family hatchback models.

The first of these new hatchbacks, the EV4, will be the first electric Kia to be built in Europe when it's launched in the UK in October. The hatchback will be built at Kia's plant in Slovakia, but it will also be offered as a saloon imported into Europe from South Korea.

The EV4 will be joined by the new K4, which was unveiled in hatchback form at the recent New York motor show and will eventually replace the outgoing Ceed in Europe.

The EV4 takes the place of the Ceed in the Slovakian factory, so the K4 will be imported to Europe from Kia's plant in Mexico in both hatch and saloon forms.

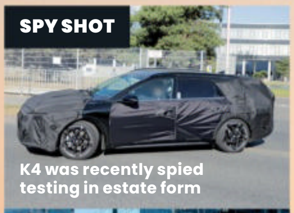
An estate version of the K4 has also been spotted undergoing testing, making what would be a three-strong model range for the K4 ahead of an expected launch later this year.

More broadly, Lee believes that Kia currently has a "strong position in Europe". He added: "Especially in the UK, where we have a very strong stance".

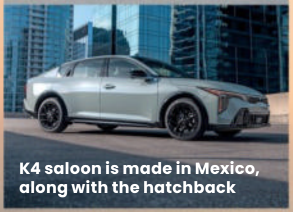
Lee was the first Korean to work at Kia UK, joining in 2002, when the UK operation became a wholly owned subsidiary of Kia's main global business. He now co-ordinates the firm's global business outside of Korea.

While Kia sales in Europe did slip back slightly year-on-year in 2024, they have still grown more than 30% since 2020. In the UK, Kia has sold more than 100,000 cars for three years running, and it is currently the third best-selling brand in 2025, less than 300 units behind second-placed BMW.

Increased competition in Europe from Chinese brands makes for a "difficult market", Lee admitted, but Kia will look to further strengthen its aftersales, parts supply and customer journeys in particular.



K4 was recently spied testing in estate form



K4 saloon is made in Mexico, along with the hatchback

New EV4 hatchback will be built in Kia's plant in Slovakia

FACING A FUTURE WITHOUT THE FOCUS ST

The Ford Focus ST hot hatch has been removed from the brand's UK line-up, ending a run that has spanned four generations and 23 years.

The 276bhp ST disappeared from price lists last month, meaning the Focus is now sold solely in mild-hybridised 1.0-litre three-pot Ecoboost form.

Focus production will end for good in November.

PETIT FOUR EN ROUTE

Renault's new 4 EV will become available to order next month. The range opens at £26,995 for Evolution trim and climbs to £28,995 for Techno and £30,995 for top-rung Iconic. Deliveries will start in summer.

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

The five-year-old Land Rover Defender has had a subtle semi-facelift. Blink-or-miss-'em tweaks include new lights and extra colours. Safety regs also mean a driver-monitoring camera. Eyes front!

"We have to strengthen the advantages of Kia in the market," he said.

Kia will not get embroiled in a price war in Europe in the face of new lower-cost competition and will not 'push' cars onto the market; it will instead maintain a laser focus on residual values, which it credits as partly responsible for the "sustainable growth" the brand has enjoyed.

Lee said Kia has done this by maintaining a "pull demand strategy", by which cars are not pushed to dealers and onto customers at discounted rates but built and sold according to customer demand.

Describing this as a "healthy cycle", Lee said: "It might sound very easy, but in reality it requires a very strong determination and sense of principle."

MARK TISSHAW

Jeep
RUBICON

STELLANTIS PICKS JEEP BOSS FILOSA AS NEW CEO

STELLANTIS HAS ANNOUNCED that ex-Jeep CEO Antonio Filosa is its new CEO, replacing Carlos Tavares, who left the firm last year.

Filosa (above) will report to Stellantis chairman John Elkann – who led the search to fill the CEO role – and will name a new leadership team for the 14 brands under the Stellantis umbrella later this month.

Tavares led Stellantis from its formation in 2021 until he was ousted late last year amid disputes with the board of management over how to tackle falling US sales and tensions with unions, dealers, suppliers and various governments.

His replacement, Italian-born Filosa, has held a number of high-ranking positions within Stellantis and its predecessor, FCA, including general manager of FCA Latin America, COO of Stellantis South America and, most recently, global CEO of Jeep.

During his tenure leading the 4x4 brand, he oversaw the launch of the crucial Avenger small crossover, which has underpinned substantial growth for Jeep in Europe, along with the unveiling and development of important upcoming models, including the Compass, Recon and Wagoneer S.

IS FILOSA A GOOD FIT?

JAMES ATTWOOD

Filosa is certainly not the splashiest hire, but he looks a smart one.

I met him last year shortly after he was named CEO of Jeep, when he held an interview session. His charisma was apparent, and he answered a diverse range of questions eloquently – without ducking any of the tough ones.

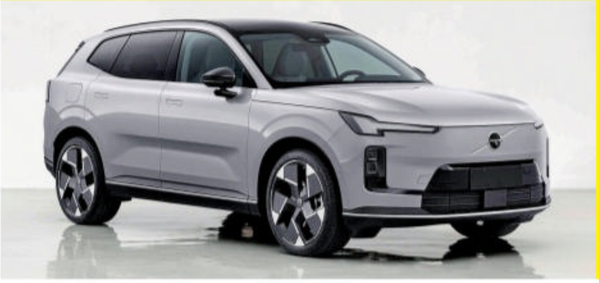
There can be a big difference between how someone presents themself in an interview and what they're like to work with, but Filosa seemed to mix his charisma with a deep resolve. He's the sort of person who could make unpopular decisions seem almost palatable.

His global perspective will be vital to improving the fortunes of a sprawling, multi-brand international group, as will his experience across all aspects of the industry.

The key challenge is improving Stellantis's fortunes in North America. He also has to contend with the uneven success of various brands, ever more complex legislation in Europe and the increased challenge of Chinese firms. Tough job.

Is he the man to do it? He has the experience needed and, crucially, he seems very different from Tavares – and that could be what Stellantis really needs.

NEW VOLVO XC70 SUV BREAKS COVER



VOLVO'S NEW XC70 plug-in hybrid has been outed ahead of its official debut, courtesy of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

Morphing from a high-riding estate to a mid-size SUV for its second generation, the XC70 is about the same size as the VW Tayron and Peugeot 5008 but has only five seats.

It is an 'extended-range' plug-in hybrid, with a 1.5-litre petrol engine and either a 21.2kWh battery, officially giving 62 miles of range, or a 39.6kWh pack to bump the range to 112 miles.

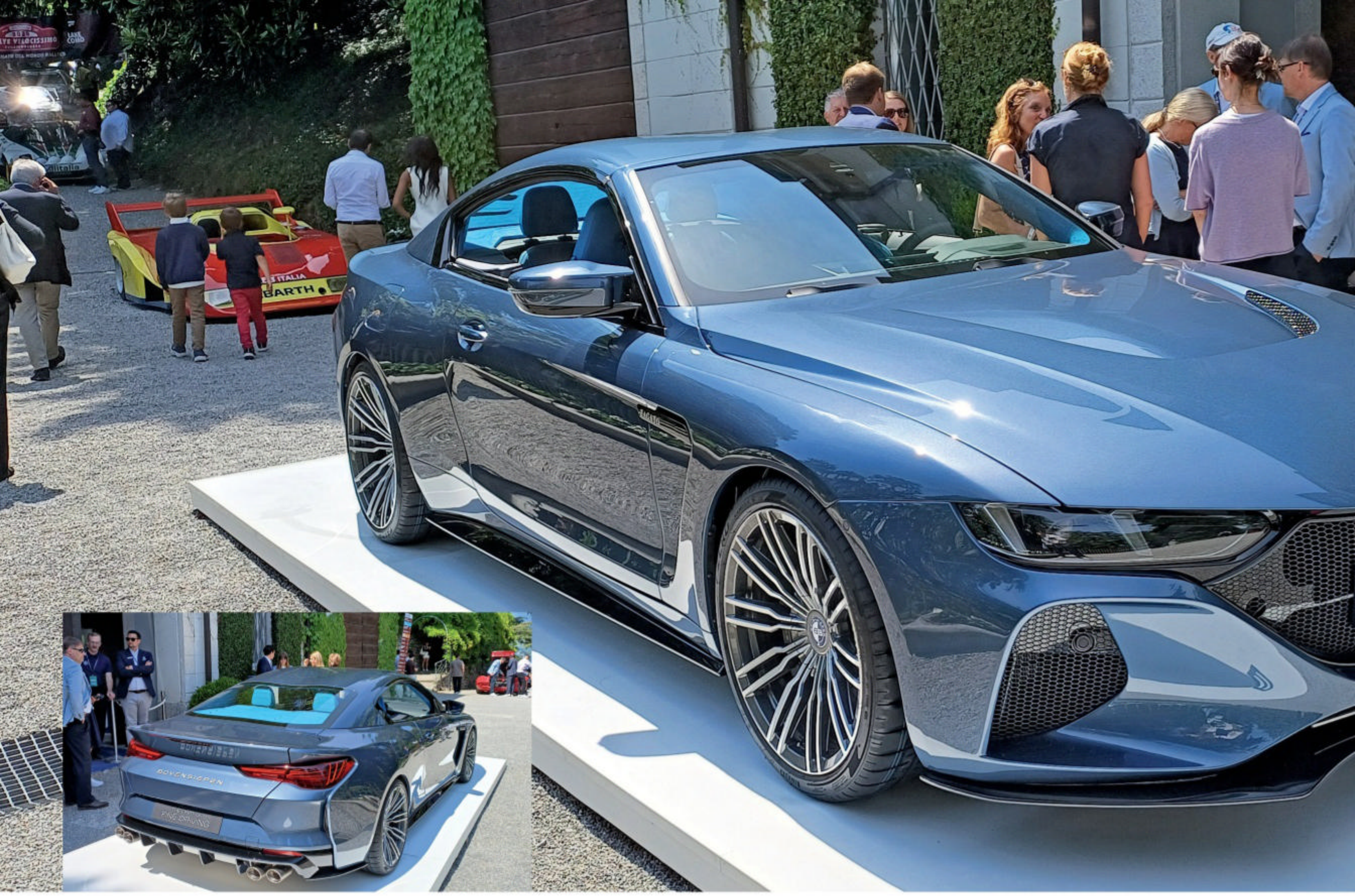
It is destined first for China, but Volvo could sell the XC70 globally in response to sustained demand for hybrids.

CHECK OUT THE GRAVEL'S KIT

Vauxhall is going off-road with the rugged Frontera Gravel. A concept for now but likely destined for showrooms, the 4x4-inspired package includes a roof rack, LED lights and chunky tyres.

CHANGE FOR THE WURST

VW's best-seller is now in supermarkets – but it's not a car. VW's Currywurst spiced sausage comfortably outsold its cars in 2024 and is now in ready-meal form in German shops including Edeka and Netto.



ALPINA FAMILY TO STAY IN CAR MAKING AFTER SALE TO BMW

Bovensiepens announce eponymous brand with Zagato-designed GT

The Bovensiepen family, founders of legendary German BMW tuner Alpina, has launched a new coachbuilding business with the unveiling of a new 600bhp super-GT styled by Italian design house Zagato.

With Alpina now owned by BMW itself, the family is shifting its focus to become "a manufacturer of outstanding automobiles that embody the ambition of fine driving".

The first project from the new outfit is an imposing, BMW M4-based grand tourer named simply the Bovensiepen Zagato.

Milanese coachbuilder Zagato has previously collaborated with Aston Martin, Ferrari, Bentley, Maserati and Alfa Romeo. Its first effort for Bovensiepen is described as "a harmonious composition of individual design" that "features and bears the unmistakable signature of the traditional Milanese design studio".

It is said to take more than 250 hours to build the Zagato, production of which will be "strictly limited" – although no precise figure has been given.

Pricing and availability will be announced at the end of this year, ahead of deliveries beginning in summer of next year.

Each car can be, Bovensiepen promises, "as unique as its owner", with extensive personalisation options available for the interior and exterior.

The Bovensiepen car is differentiated extensively from the BMW on which it's based by a totally bespoke treatment at the front and rear, a reshaped bonnet, a revised side profile and Zagato's trademark double-bubble roof.

The Zagato keeps its

SUPER-SPECIAL BMWs TO BUCK EV TREND

THE BOVENSIEPEN ZAGATO was unwrapped as BMW revealed its own ultra-exclusive GT, the £430,000 8 Series-based Speedtop shooting brake, due in limited numbers next year.

It's the latest in a run of highly exclusive, high-powered BMW special editions, following the closely related Skytop roadster, with which it shares a 4.4-litre V8, and the straight six-powered 3.0 CSL – and now the firm has suggested collectible cars in this vein are likely to be ICE-powered for the foreseeable future.

Max Missoni, who moved from Polestar to lead design for BMW's upper mid-size and luxury-class models, said at the Speedtop's unveiling: "I totally believe in the electric powertrain, but in this collectible space there has been a bit of a reversal of this trend: there are more and more analogue cars in small production runs.

"I think that's an indication of how the future is going to go. I think there will be a very strong polarity in this space."

BMW recently revealed

THE FIRST OF
FINE DRIVING
BOVENSIEPEN

Extensive personalisation options will be offered to maximise exclusivity

3.0-litre straight-six BMW engine, but output has been ramped up to 603bhp and 516lb ft for a 0-62mph time of just 3.3sec and a top speed in excess of 186mph, Bovensiepen said.

It features bespoke Bilstein dampers that can be configured in three driving modes (Comfort, Sport and Sport Plus). Bovensiepen said these settings offer "a range from pronounced comfort to athletic driving dynamics".

It also gains a lightweight, twin-exit Akrapovič titanium exhaust system, which is said to be 40% lighter than the standard system.

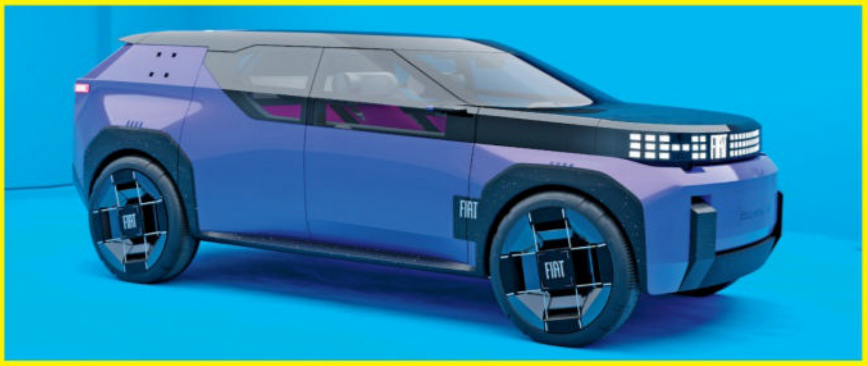
BMW will reveal the next steps for the Alpina brand next year, it has said. Former Polestar designer Max Missoni has joined the German firm to lead the styling for all luxury models, including Alpinas.

FELIX PAGE

a radical, mega-powered electric super-saloon, the Vision Dynamic Experience. It is said to be a rolling laboratory for future EV tech, and there are no plans for production, even on a limited basis.

Vision Dynamic Experience won't make production

FIAT MULTIPLA-INSPIRED SUV TO TROUBLE DACIA BIGSTER



FIAT'S FORTHCOMING Dacia Bigster rival could channel the spirit of the cult-classic Multipla MPV when it arrives in 2027.

The new SUV is one of two C-segment models that the Italian brand is set to launch in the next two years, alongside a rakish, raised hatchback. They were previewed by Panda-inspired SUV and Fastback concepts unveiled early last year.

Those models will be a maximum of 4.5 metres long and sit on the same cost-conscious Stellantis Smart Car platform as the smaller Grande Panda, enabling them to be offered with electric and hybrid powertrains.

While the new SUV will sit broadly as part of the Panda design family and distinct from the range inspired by the classic 500, Fiat bosses have hinted it won't necessarily feature that name.

Asked about the risks of Fiat expanding beyond its core city car market into the C-segment, Fiat Europe boss Gaetano Thorel said: "It will be a challenge, because [it seems] we don't have the same legacy with family movers as we do with [the] 500 and Panda, but in reality we have, because when you think about the Multipla, then Fiat has a story on that.

"But thanks to Stellantis, we have a possibility to offer our customers and dealers a full passenger-car line-up from 2.5 metres to 4.4 metres. That is the Fiat territory."

The Multipla arrived in 1998 as a 4m-long compact MPV with two rows of three seats and a host of space-saving features. The styling was divisive and the model was not a commercial success, but it won praise for its design, with Autocar's 2000 road test calling it "the most innovative and exciting car in its class".

The new model will have more of a traditional SUV appearance but could echo the Multipla in terms of maximising space in a small footprint. The Citroën C3 Aircross, which shares the Smart Car platform, seats seven.

The Fastback concept is likely to morph into a raised hatchback that will serve as a spiritual successor to the Fiat Tipo.

Fiat design chief François Leboine said future models would use design cues from the Grande Panda and elsewhere in its heritage line-up, but he insisted the brand wouldn't fixate on retro designs.

"There is a retro flair on the products, but if you don't know the past, the products still have to work," he said. "We play with the codes of pop culture and car culture, but they have to work for a new generation."

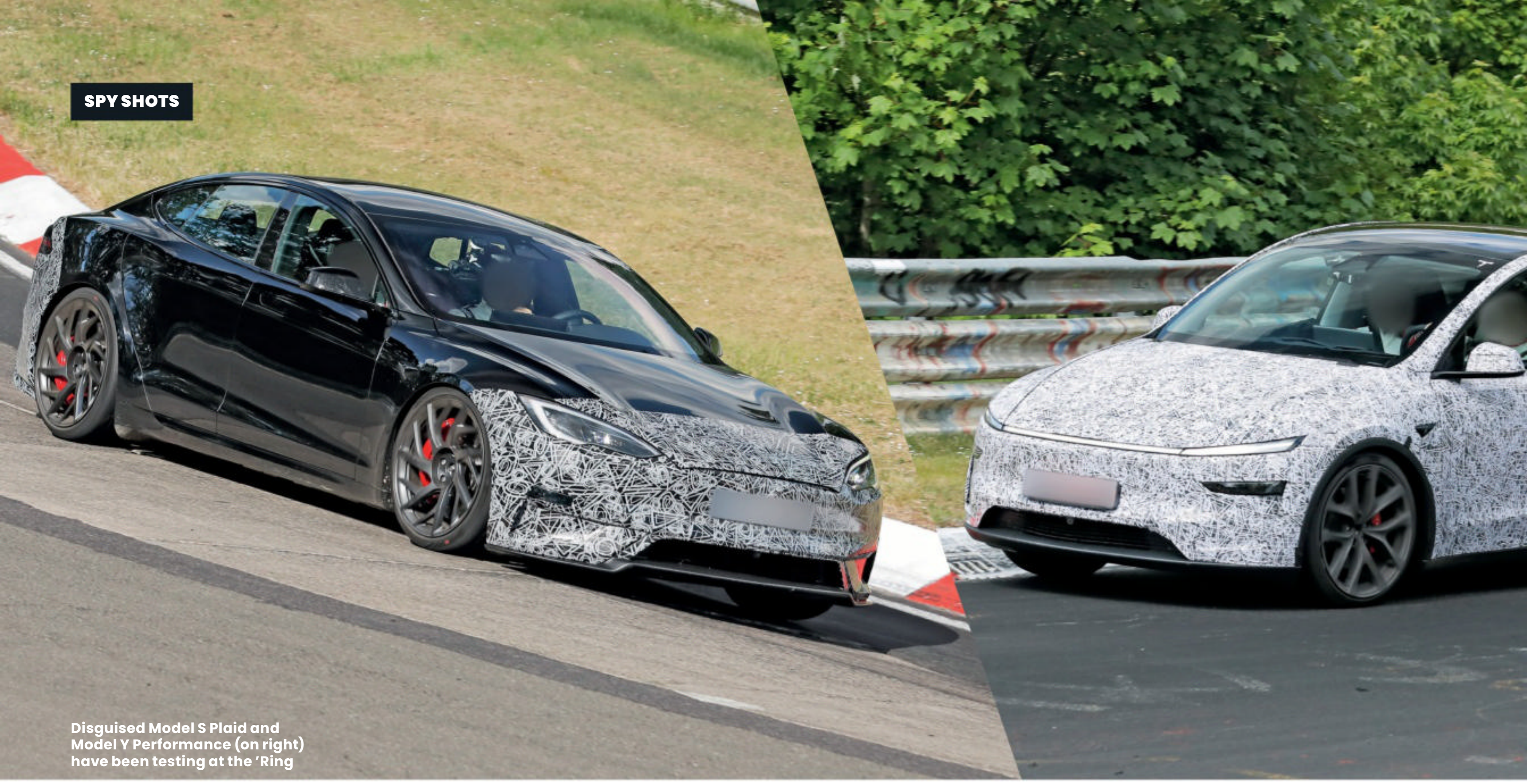
GREAT WIDE HOPE

11 Nov 1998
The Multipla was oddly styled but highly acclaimed for its practicality credentials and decent drivability. Its biggest rival? The Renault Scenic. It looks like a reprise of one of the 1990s' fiercest family car showdowns is on the cards.

SPIRIT OF 205 GTI REVIVED FOR HOT E-208

Peugeot is re-entering the hot hatch arena with a high-powered GTi version of the e-208. The firm's first sporting EV, to be revealed at Le Mans on 13 June, will target the Alpine A290 with racy styling, a tightened chassis and a Torsen limited-slip diff.

AUTOCAR IMAGE



Disguised Model S Plaid and Model Y Performance (on right) have been testing at the 'Ring

HOT TESLAS UP ANTE TO TAKE ON EUROPE'S FASTEST EVs

New 'Ring-honed Model S Plaid and Model Y Performance are imminent

Tesla is priming reinvigorated versions of its hottest models to contend with fearsome new EV contenders from the brand's European rivals.

Updated versions of Tesla's Model S Plaid and Model Y Performance have been spotted testing at the Nürburgring, suggesting imminent launches.

The Plaid – currently one of the world's most powerful saloons, with 1020bhp – was seen wearing light camouflage, concealing an aero-optimising refresh of its front and rear ends. The air ducts in its lower front fascia appear more angular and aggressive than before, while the rear diffuser has gained a ledge and a more protrusive centre section that is most likely intended to reduce lift at speed. The reworked front end also conceals an additional camera for the advanced driver assistance systems.

Tesla has yet to confirm whether the Plaid will get any more substantial improvements under the skin, but the brand's more recent launches point to potential upgrades that it could receive. The Cybertruck, for example, features 800V electricals rather than the 400V systems used in the Models 3, S, Y and X, allowing claimed peak charging speeds in excess of 400kW.

Macan Turbo Electric will rival hot Model Y

That it's testing at the Nürburgring could point to Tesla looking to reclaim its production EV lap record at the Nordschleife. The Plaid was dethroned by the Porsche Taycan Turbo GT last year. But the Taycan's significant 18sec advantage over the Plaid (7min 7sec versus 7min 25sec) suggests the American car would need extensive modifications to close the gap, such as extra power or a new chassis package.

The Plaid faces an increasingly tough market: Mercedes-AMG is on the verge of launching its own 1000bhp-plus super-

> **"The Plaid would need extra power or a new chassis package to close the gap"**

Taycan
RX25 YGT

Porsche Taycan Turbo GT took the 'Ring record for production EVs last year

WIESMANN DOWN BUT NOT OUT

Wiesmann is still planning to return to action with its debut EV, the Project Thunderball, but has been set back by strong industry headwinds.

Three years since Autocar tried a prototype of the 671bhp roadster and a year after it was due on the road, strategy boss Jaspreet Ahuja said the German firm had been delayed by "supply chain challenges" and "the confusion changes in tariffs are creating for manufacturers like us".

He added: "We remain committed to producing the Thunderball, and I am hoping we will have an update for you by the end of the year."

saloon, while American EV maker Lucid's Air Sapphire is the world's most potent four-door, with 1234bhp.

The new Model Y Performance will also face a much more crowded field of rivals than the first car had to contend with. Newcomers include the Porsche Macan Turbo Electric, Alpine A390, Hyundai Ioniq 5 N and Smart #5 Brabus, each offering different takes on the sporting EV crossover at a range of price points.

The Tesla is expected to employ the same dual-motor, four-wheel-drive powertrain as its Model 3 Performance counterpart, producing a combined 510bhp and allowing for a 0-62mph sprint time comfortably below 4.0sec. Tesla officially quotes 2.9sec to 60mph, although this includes a short rollout to low speed that muddies the waters somewhat.

Range is likely to be less than the Model 3 Performance's 328 miles, although the presence of a long ducktail spoiler hints at further aerodynamic tweaks to minimise drag and potentially boost range.

Inside, it is expected to get the 3 Performance's thickly bolstered sports seats, along with carbonfibre trim detailing.

Given the smaller Model 3 Performance is priced from £59,990, the equivalent Y is most likely to breach the £60,000 barrier.

CHARLIE MARTIN

AUTOCAR IMAGE

VOLKSWAGEN MULLS ELECTRIC TOURAN REVIVAL

VOLKSWAGEN IS WEIGHING up the viability of an electric compact MPV to fill the void left by the Touran and offer a practical alternative to SUVs for families.

The new model is said to be under review, with inspiration coming from earlier concepts, including 2016's Budd-e, a 4.6m-long MPV that was based on an early version of the MEB electric platform, which underpins the brand's current EVs.

The Touran, launched in 2003, became a mainstay of the firm's European line-up over two generations. It was overshadowed by SUVs in recent years but remains one of the most successful models of its type, with over 2.6 million sold globally over a 19-year period until 2022.

Sources have revealed that VW recently retrieved various MPV concepts from storage to support discussions exploring how their designs and packaging could be adapted for a new model.

The move reflects a shift in thinking at VW, where there is recognition that a dedicated family MPV may still have relevance, both in Europe, where SUVs are now the default choice, and China, where MPVs are enjoying a renaissance.

No decision has been made, but a new MPV would sit beneath the ID Buzz, offering a smaller footprint, less weight and a more affordable price. It has been described by company insiders as a modern-day Microbus.

Considerations include an upright silhouette, short overhangs, flat floor and high roofline, all aimed at maximising interior space and giving the versatility expected by customers - including German taxi fleets and families who want a "no-nonsense, high-utility EV with sliding rear doors and strong day-to-day usability".

WHAT A NEW TOURAN NEEDS TO BEAT

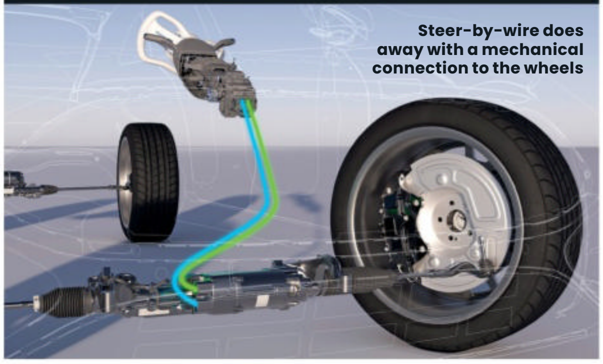
CITROËN BERLINGO Plus its Peugeot, Vauxhall and Toyota twins. The go-to family MPV starts at just £23k and is offered with petrol, diesel and EV power.

FORD TOURNEO CONNECT Van-derived people-mover, twinned with Volkswagen's own Caddy, is a PHEV with a 68-mile EV range.

ZEEKR MIX Geely-owned premium brand's China-only MPV has twin sliders, swivelling seats and a wheelbase of more than three metres.

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE



Steer-by-wire does away with a mechanical connection to the wheels

NEXT-GENERATION STEERING IS GOING DOWN TO THE WIRE

STEER-BY-WIRE is coming of age quickly and on its way to the showrooms of various brands. Mercedes will be the first German manufacturer to introduce the technology with a ZF-developed system that does away with mechanical connections between the driver and road wheels, relying instead on sensors and electric actuators.

Nio is also fitting the ET9 with a ZF system, Lexus is launching steer-by-wire with the RZ next year and Bosch has three Chinese customers for its steer-by-wire through its joint venture, Bosch Huaya Steering Systems, with production starting soon.

Steer-by wire was once an automotive forbidden fruit: legislation dictated that the connection between driver and wheels was mechanical. UNECE Regulation 79 changed that in 2003, making steer-by-wire legal in Europe. Safety is taken care of in Mercedes' system mainly by duplicated controls, so if one electronic link between driver and steering fails, the other will remain in place. Redundancy applies to every step, including dual electronic signal paths, duplicated power supplies and hardware actuators. Even if the whole lot fails, there are other ways of maintaining control. In the unlikely event of complete failure, some automated steering is still possible using rear-axle steering and by braking individual wheels using ESP.

The Mercedes' steering feedback unit (SFU) sends an electronic signal representing the driver's inputs to the steering rack unit (SRU), which does the steering. There's no mechanical connection, so there's no steering torque, or feel. To create some, the tyre-to-road contact is calculated and fed back through the system.

Steer-by-wire systems are not simple bolt-on pieces of kit, and each manufacturer will do a considerable amount of work calibrating it on a model-by-model basis. Mercedes has already done more than 621,000 miles (one million kilometres) bench testing and the same again on proving grounds and in real-world traffic.

Nio says there are packaging and design benefits with freedom to set the steering wheel angle and the amount of feedback, and control is more precise. A rectangular steering wheel is possible, for a better view of the instruments, and full lock can be achieved with only a 240deg movement of the wheel. The ET9 system filters more than 80% of road vibrations back through the wheel from the road, and the steering column can telescope in and out by 153mm. Nio also says it opens up opportunities for a Game Mode – which is important in the Chinese market particularly. It also enables other technologies in the future, such as steering using a joystick rather than a wheel.

Mercedes will launch its thoroughly tested system next year

ALPINE SET TO USE IN-WHEEL MOTORS ON SPORTS CAR EVs

Renault boss confirms plans for forthcoming electric A110 and A310

Alpine's upcoming electric sports cars will use in-wheel motors as part of a radical plan to reduce weight below that of an equivalent petrol-engined sports car, Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo has confirmed.

"It will change everything," de Meo said of the Alpine Performance Platform (APP), which has been designed by the premium brand for up to four separate models - including a sports car that is due next year to replace the A110 (previewed, below left) and which was previewed on the sidelines of the A390 electric SUV's unveiling.

In-wheel motors offer a range of benefits when attempting to package a sports car for the modern era, Renault Group design head Laurens van den Acker told Autocar.

"With a motor in the wheels, you have more room for either luggage or footwells or for sliding your seat backwards or forwards," he said. "The A110 is fine for a weekend, but if you want to appeal to a bigger audience, you need more room."

In-wheel motors have forced the designers to slightly widen the car's body, van den Acker added.

De Meo said Alpine is planning "three or four" APP-based models. Along with a two-seat coupé and a roadster, there will be a Porsche Taycan rival called the A310 (imagined above), which de Meo described as a "sports sedan".

In-wheel motors free up space to put the batteries in a different location from the traditional place of under the floor – a format that has proved restrictive for sports cars, given the need to force the driver to sit higher. In the A110 EV, for example, the batteries are expected to be stacked behind the driver to enable design and dynamic characteristics comparable to those of today's mid-engined A110.

The aluminium platform will save 150-250kg compared with equivalent electric sports cars, according to Alpine, but further details remain under wraps for the time being.

Parent company Renault will use in-wheel motors first in the 5 Turbo 3E - a £135,000 electric hyper-hatchback that's due in limited numbers next year.

That car's two rear-mounted in-wheel motors combine to produce a claimed 3540lb ft of torque at the wheel.

The all-aluminium platform was developed by Alpine, suggesting it previews the APP.

In-wheel motors also allow individual control of separate wheels, known as torque vectoring – a technology Alpine has introduced in the A390, which uses two inboard motors at the rear.

Suppliers include the UK's Protean, which has recently launched its fifth-generation model. Protean believes that by the middle of the next decade, in-wheel motors will be a €20 billion (£17bn) market globally, but it admits the high cost remains an issue.

Supercar hybrid motor supplier Yasa is developing in-wheel motors also.

DAVID FRANCIS

Renault 5 Turbo 3E will use in-wheel motors to produce 3540lb ft

FIRST SIGHT OF ELECTRIC A110

Alpine previewed the electric A110 sports car on the sidelines of the A390's unveiling. Despite the covers masking the main design details from public view, we can see it will have distinctive new hexagonal headlights and retain the current car's cab-forward silhouette.

WHY THE WHEEL IS YET TO BE REINVENTED

Issues with in-wheel motors include the extra unsprung weight and the potentially damaging forces put through the motor, for example when the wheel hits a pothole. The tech has yet to make it onto a production car.

They featured in the innovative Nissan Bladeglider concept of 2016 (above) and were meant to have been used to power the cancelled Lordstown electric pick-up truck, with motors supplied by Slovakia's Elaphe.

The Dutch Lightyear solar-powered EV was also set to use Elaphe in-wheel motors before it too succumbed to financial realities.

LONDON RESIDENTS TO LOSE DISCOUNTS AS C-CHARGE HIKED

TRANSPORT FOR LONDON (TfL) has proposed raising the Congestion Charge for driving into the capital during peak hours from £15 per day to £18.

TfL has asked for the public's views on the plan, which has been mooted to come into effect from 2 January next year.

This would be the first rise in the Congestion Charge since 2020.

TfL said the proposed increase is below inflation rates of the past five years. According to the Bank of England, £15 in 2020 was equivalent to £19 today.

The move would be the first in a series of "routine annual increases" that TfL is proposing, in line with the rise in cost of public transport.

Among other measures intended to increase charges for motorists, the transport authority has proposed limiting the discount for residents of central London to electric vehicles exclusively from March 2027.

It also suggested that EVs – which will lose their congestion charge exemption from 25 December this year – will be charged a discounted rate dependent on their vehicle class.

It said that electric vans, HGVs and quadricycles should be given a 50% discount from 2 January next year (so incurring £9 per day), while electric cars should be granted 25% off (£13.50 per day).

It also proposed halving those discounts from 4 March 2030, so electric cars would qualify for a reduction of just 12.5%.

ECS THRESHOLD UNDER REVIEW

The UK government is set to incentivise EV uptake by raising the Expensive Car Supplement (ECS) threshold for EVs that cost more than £40,000.

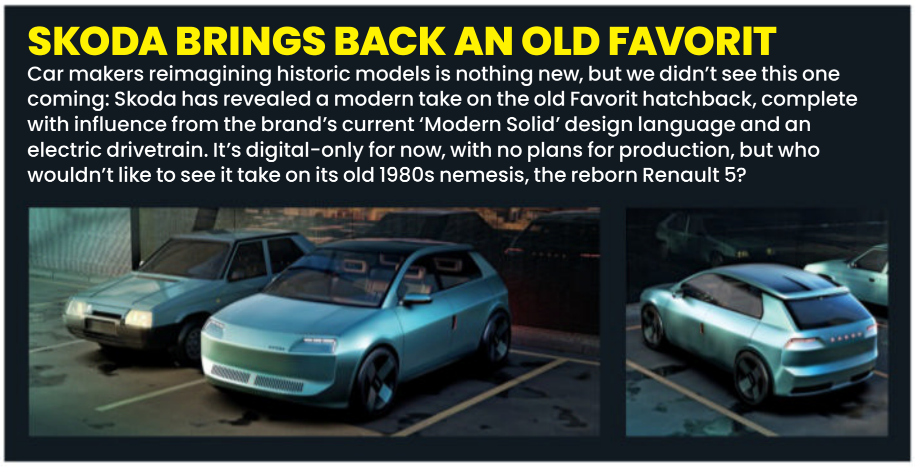
Currently, the ECS applies to all cars costing more than £40,000, adding £425 annually in additional vehicle excise duty (VED) from years two to six after purchase. Together with the annual VED rate of £195, that means such cars incur a tax bill of £3100 in the first six years.

But with the average EV now costing around £10,000 more than that, the government is considering raising the threshold for EVs – or scrapping it entirely – to drive EV uptake and help manufacturers achieve the sales targets imposed by the ZEV mandate.

Chancellor Rachel Reeves could offer further details when she reveals the Autumn Budget in October.

SKODA BRINGS BACK AN OLD FAVORIT

Car makers reimagining historic models is nothing new, but we didn't see this one coming: Skoda has revealed a modern take on the old Favorit hatchback, complete with influence from the brand's current 'Modern Solid' design language and an electric drivetrain. It's digital-only for now, with no plans for production, but who wouldn't like to see it take on its old 1980s nemesis, the reborn Renault 5?



Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW

Many drivers don't need more than a Sandero, believes Dacia boss

"IT'S RIDICULOUS TO buy a C-segment car just to take to school or the supermarket. You're using tonnes of metal and lots of screens just to go to Tesco. It's fair and intelligent to ask: 'Have we gone too far?'"

Dacia CEO Denis Le Vot certainly thinks so, as does his boss, Renault Group CEO Luca de Meo, along with de Meo's counterpart at rival firm Stellantis, executive chairman John Elkann.

De Meo and Elkann recently joined forces to call on European legislators to move away from EV mandates and instead focus on an overall reduction of CO_2 emissions. Their goal is to preserve the affordable small cars that are being priced out of existence with the rise of costly EV tech and further active safety legislation.

Given that Dacia's raison d'être lies in small, affordable cars, it's a topic that's clearly in Le Vot's wheelhouse. He is pleased that the conversation has entered the mainstream at the top of the industry, and it's with legislators to do something about, to focus more on the "life-cycle assessment" of a car rather than its tailpipe emissions.

Can they really change their mind? "Yes," comes his emphatic response. "It's just a question of time." That time is within the next six months, when legislators will reconvene to check on the industry's progress in hitting EV targets and review the legislation itself.

Le Vot has nothing against larger cars; he is currently overseeing the launch of the brand's first C-segment SUV, the Bigster. Yet he laments the death throes of the A-segment.

"It has almost died," he says, "pushing people straight into the B-segment. Now that's suffering, so people would go straight to the C-segment."

Even if you only want or need a small new car, you're forced into something big, and this is directly affecting the affordability of new cars.

"Step back and you see that we have a problem," Le Vot says. "Now is the moment to do something about it."

De Meo's and Elkann's recent comments centred on CO_2 emissions, but Le Vot also highlighted the active safety technology, namely GSR2 regulations, which require new cars to have a suite of extra safety tech, that is also driving up the price of small cars.

"Do we really need to have lane keeping assistance in a little family car?" he asks.

Le Vot also reiterated that Dacia won't "chase stars" in terms of a Euro NCAP safety rating. He is a firm supporter of standards and standardised testing for passive safety, but he questions "the weight active safety has in the game" when deciding a car's overall safety rating.

One thread binding all this is that any new car will be safer and less polluting than the one it is replacing.

As Le Vot reaffirms: "When you replace a car that is six, seven years old, you are doing a good job for the planet and its population."

> **"Do we really need to have lane keeping assistance in a little family car?"**

NEW MEGA-BENTAYGA USES 641BHP TO OUTDRAG 911, M4

V8-engined Speed SUV also gains launch control and drift mode

The new Bentley Bentayga Speed has been unwrapped as the brand's quickest SUV yet, beating its predecessor to 62mph by half a second and going on to 193mph.

It swaps the previous Bentayga Speed's 6.0-litre W12, now retired, for a twin-turbocharged 4.0-litre V8 that puts out 641bhp and 627lb ft – a gain of 15bhp and a loss of only 37lb ft.

The smaller powerplant also plays a significant role in cutting the Speed's kerb weight by 42kg to 2466kg.

Helped along by a new launch control function, the super-SUV is now capable of completing the 0-62mph dash in 3.4sec, beating the 3.9sec and 4.5sec sprint times of the old Speed and the V8-engined S.

The extra power also boosts the Bentayga's top speed by 3mph.

In addition to its enhanced pace, the Speed gets reworked drive modes, including a Sport setting that increases the dampers' stiffness by 15% and slackens off the stability control to "permit exhilarating drift angles".

Meanwhile, rear-wheel steering aids manoeuvrability at lower speeds and boosts stability when pressing on.

A sports exhaust system is fitted as standard, but there is an optional Akrapovič-supplied titanium system with four tailpipes, said to unleash the "drama and potency" of the new powerplant.

The new super-Bentayga is differentiated visually from other variants by the Speed badges on its flanks, as well as a choice of bespoke 22in or 23in wheel designs.

The larger of those two is offered as an optional extra with the addition of carbon-ceramic discs.

Inside, the Speed gets a different layout on its digital instrument screen, as well as Speed badging on the passenger side of the dashboard and the treadplates, plus matching embroidery on the seats.

Prices start at £219,000, positioning the Speed between the S (£201,500) and the more opulent Mulliner EWB (£259,300).

Its closest rivals include the V8 Range Rover Sport SV (£169k), the V8 plug-in hybrid Lamborghini Urus SE (£208k) and Aston Martin's V8 DBX S (£210k).

CHARLIE MARTIN

The pictured car's specification – white with green flashes – matches the extreme Continental GT3-R, launched 10 years ago as a lightened, stiffened, overtly driver-focused version of Crewe's luxury GT.

As in other post-facelift Bentaygas, touchscreen is 10.9in

Speed interior brings sports seats, two-coloured leather

Optional 23in wheels can be paired with carbon-ceramic discs

0-62MPH: WHAT THE SPEED BEATS

It's one of the largest and heaviest cars made in Britain, yet this power-mad penthouse suite can claim some surprising scalps in the traffic light grand prix, including these...

Bentley Bentayga Speed 3.4sec

Porsche 911 Carrera S 3.5sec

BMW M4 Competition xDrive 3.5sec

Aston Martin DB12 3.6sec

Mercedes-AMG A45 S 3.9sec

Lotus Emira V6 4.3sec

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

Wax on, wax off: A110 gets the full LifeShine treatment at Autoglym's Letchworth HQ

MONDAY

What's more appealing than a gleaming motor, especially when it's your own? Not much in my book. Responding enthusiastically to an invitation from Autoglym, the Letchworth-based gurus of car cleaning, I took my Alpine to their HQ to benefit from a treatment called LifeShine, which cleans and seals the surfaces so they gleam for years. While my car was cleaned and treated by an industry expert called Karl Heath (who reckons he has the main assets required for his job: OCD and a love of cars), I toured Autoglym's site, which includes an R&D lab and an impressively busy packing facility. Both underscored the company's dedication to quality and service.

Before you ask, this was a freebie. But perhaps it boosts the truth of my impressions if I tell you that I'm now aiming to hand over £499 of my own spondulicks so my Ford pick-up can have the treatment – because it's so effective and impressive. When I put the A110 back in the garage, I had several minutes' trouble refitting its cover: every surface is now so damned shiny that the cover wouldn't sit on the roof while I spread it out. That's a happy problem.

TUESDAY

I've just finished a short piece on the excellent new Audi A3 PHEV, a car I liked instantly for its compactness, quality, great steering, excellent driving position and flat, controlled ride. In fact, nearly everything was right about this plug-in A3 except for some ludicrous specifications that are not the fault of the manufacturer. If you look on p31, you will see that this car has an official fuel consumption of 941mpg and a CO_2 output of 9g/km. Such 'official' figures are so irrelevant to owners that car makers have stopped quoting them, knowing they won't be believed. Yet they're not allowed to quote anything else. This Audi is an excellent and frugal car, whose makers deserve a way of boasting about its efficiency. At present, they can't.

> **"Its makers deserve a way of boasting. At present, they can't"**

New book tells the story of the Rover P8 that never was

THURSDAY

Car books are nearly always labours of love, but you won't find a tome that better fits this description than a new offering from James Taylor and Douglas Cooke. It's called Secret Rovers, the story of two excellent, advanced British luxury cars proposed for the 1970s: a fine saloon and an eye-popping V8 sports car. Together, they could have maintained Rover's then-excellent reputation for building cutting-edge machines, had it not been for a confluence of economic difficulties, political chicanery and crummy management decisions.

I've known for several years that this book was coming, not least because the authors flatteringly asked me to write a foreword, but what made me see the project as exceptional was the depth of the writers' original research and their rare and excellent ability to frame the tale as a racy story, finding ways to do justice to the skills of engineers and designers whose efforts were largely wasted. Prototypes of both cars, the Rover P8 and P9, repose in the British Motor Museum. Read the book, see the cars and rue the muppet management of the 1970s.

FRIDAY

Why, people occasionally ask me, have I never written a book? Compared with the record of some colleagues, it's a disgrace, given that I've been sticking stories in car magazines for 50 years. My excuse is that I became addicted to the rapid response of a magazine (and more lately website) audience early on, and that's what I still enjoy. Especially since said audience – provided it reckons you're doing your best – is almost universally nice to you. We hacks don't compliment our readers enough. Take it from me: you're every bit as vital as the writer.

AND ANOTHER THING

New research by Citroën (puffing the few EVs it sells here) says London kids view a family electric car purchase as an especially effective move towards cleaning up the environment – a fact that chimes with my own experience. It becomes ever more obvious from letters and meetings that the 'I'll never drive one of those EVs' cohort is populated entirely by old farts. Their grandchildren are far wiser.

GET IN TOUCH
steve.cropley@haymarket.com

PRIOR CONVICTION

Matt Prior

It's taking a while, like closing an ill-fitting lid on a plastic kitchen container. But another corner on the 'affordable hot hatch' tub is clicking shut, and, unlike sometimes previously, I don't think a corner on the other side is about to pop back open again in defiance.

Which is a slightly clumsy way of avoiding the 'nail in the coffin' cliché. Also I think it's vanishingly rare (I could be wrong) that a coffin lid's opposite corner creeps open again when someone is hammering down the opposite side.

Anyway, what I'm saying is that Ford is preparing to unalive the Focus ST. Production ends in November, and it has been removed from price lists in the UK because all the remaining ones are accounted for. And this time I don't think anyone is about to launch a new affordable petrol hot hatchback you could choose to consider instead. Although do go ahead and prove me wrong, somebody, please.

It seems like a very long time, partly because it is, since my mate Jason, when he was a young man, bought a Citroën Saxo VTR on low- or no-interest finance and got free insurance thrown in. It even feels like a long time, although it isn't, since Hyundai offered the i20 N for under £25k.

The hot hatches that remain on sale today – and there are fewer than a handful, including the Focus ST – are basically £40k cars. So it has sort of been true for a while, but only now, with the demise of the Focus ST confirmed, does the malaise feel as terminal as it clearly has been for quite some years now. The hot hatch era is gone.

Should one be sad about it? I think so. Because not very long ago, if you were young and you wanted to get into cars, you bought an ordinary hatchback with a bigger engine and some tidy suspension, and you had a nice time driving it. Then, when you were older and had a house and some money, you bought a sports car. But the mood was established early on.

A bargain Boxster is tempting – until you look at the tax bill

What's the option now? New hot hatchbacks are too expensive, and while some fun electric cars, like the Alpine A290, are becoming affordable, that will be little solace to you if you live in a rented flat, because buying an Alpine will be too expensive, and your rented accommodation has no charger anyway.

A used one? This is a possibility, if it hasn't already been stolen or crashed. Or how about an affordable used sports car? This is also a nice idea, but it requires one to choose wisely. Since April, cars registered between 2001 and 2017 have had some wacky VED rates applied. My Audi A2 emits 119g/km of CO_2 and costs £35 a year to tax. I like the lovely idea of a bargain Porsche Boxster, which emits 239g/km of CO_2 – twice the amount, so naturally that will cost twice as much as the Audi to tax, yes? Actually no. It is £735 a year, 21 times as much.

> **"I doubt banning new affordable fun cars was the aim"**

I doubt that banning new affordable fun cars and making thousands of old ones exhaustively expensive to run was the aim. We live in a time of complex regulation and unintended, unexpected consequences. But if you were feeling ostracised by 'the system' or 'the man' (or 'the woman') and were having uncharitable thoughts when a VED bill of £760 arrived (for 255g/km-plus), I completely understand why.

There are fudges, loopholes, gaps in the system, of course. It's why Ford's main performance car in the UK is now a Ranger and there was a story in a newspaper the other day complaining about the number and size of American V8 pick-ups being privately imported to Britain. Well, if you make a satisfying domestically approved V8 near impossible to come by, that's what people will do.

And I believe in the car enough, both as the most brilliant and convenient form of transport and as a fun object for enthusiasts and hobbyists, that at whatever your budget, I can see a way into having and enjoying one. But as the affordable performance Ford disappears from price lists for the first time in my half-century life, it has never felt quite so difficult as today.

GET IN TOUCH
matthew.prior@haymarket.com

Focus ST production will end this year, and we might never see its like again

Damien Smith

"I cannot believe it," said a victorious Palou. "What an amazing day"

Marcus Ericsson looked sick and ashen. There's nothing much worse in motorsport than finishing second in the Indianapolis 500, and the Swede had just done so for the second time in three years.

The ex-Formula 1 driver at least has an Indy 500 win to his name, scored in 2022 for Chip Ganassi. But this time, now with Andretti, he looked odds-on to become a two-time winner of the so-called 'greatest spectacle in racing' as the race entered its final stages. He would have finished first on the road, too, had he been up against just about anyone other than the guy who beat him: Álex Palou, the Spanish king of Indycar.

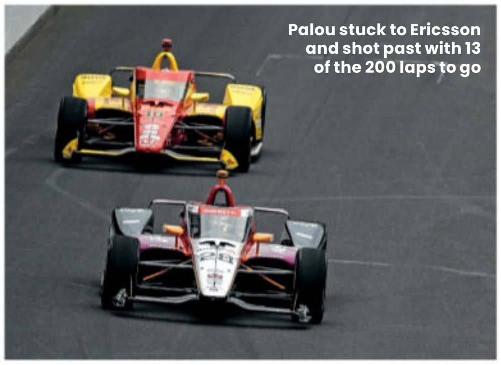
PALOU WINS CLEVER

A rain delay and a seemingly endless string of incidents made this a chaotic Indy 500, especially in its first half. Then in the final quarter, offset fuel strategies were converging – and it was all looking good for Ericsson. He returned to the lead from his final pitstop ahead of Palou with fresher Firestones and without a need to worry about fuel consumption. In contrast, Palou was given a strict target number to hit by his engineer over the radio if he wanted to make the finish. "No problem," he replied, with a cool confidence that carried eerie echoes of Michael Schumacher in his pomp.

Palou tracked Ericsson despite his fuel-saving shackles. In the circumstances, making a pass too soon made little sense – or at least that's what we all thought, the leader included. But on lap 187 of 200, Palou slung his yellow Ganassi Dallara-Honda down the inside of the purple Andretti equivalent into turn one and hit the front. Beautifully judged – but then what?

Ahead of them, Devlin DeFrancesco and Louis Foster were duelling hard as the final runners racing on the lead lap. The backmarkers seemed a distraction to the only battle that really counted, but for Palou they were an opportunity. Four years ago, he had been defeated by wily old Hélio Castroneves, who had taken his fourth Indy 500 win by using the draft of backmarkers to eke out his fuel. This time, Palou used what he had learned from that hard lesson and ran in the wake of DeFrancesco and Foster, until with five laps to go his engineer uttered the magic words: "Burn all the fuel you need."

Ericsson kept right on Palou's tail in those final laps, but when Nolan Siegel dumped his Arrow McLaren entry into the wall in the final seconds the result was set. Even so, Palou had it all under control to claim the biggest win of his life.



Palou stuck to Ericsson and shot past with 13 of the 200 laps to go

> "Making a pass then made little sense – or so we all thought"

Then another bitter pill for Ericsson. At the post-race technical inspection his car was one of three to fail because of a violation, and he was dumped to the back of the results. Second or last, it all adds up to defeat.

BETTER THAN A TITLE

"Now you're a real Indycar driver," said one voice as overjoyed Palou struggled to take in his achievement. It seemed a bit rich for a driver who has won three Indycar Series titles in four years, but the 28-year-old would have understood the sentiment. As he had expressed himself, an Indycar career isn't complete without a victory in the race that counts for so much more than any other – more than any series title too.

Somehow, this was also Palou's first victory on an oval, in a championship that mixes road and street courses with America's traditional turn-left-only speedways. What a time and a place to break the duck.

It was Palou's fifth win from the first six races this term, and in the one he lost, at Long Beach, he still finished second. Clearly a fourth title beckons. But ticking off the Indy 500 was the priority.

He is a phenomenon, a clear cut above any of his rivals – and it just feels right that he is now immortalised as a winner at The Brickyard.

SHADOW OVER PENSKE

Palou's victory run was an upbeat finish to a difficult month of May for Indycar, specifically for Penske. Its second technical illegality breach in 14 months being spotted in the run-up to the race was more than awkward for Roger Penske's team, given that he also owns the series and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Josef Newgarden and Will Power were dumped to the back of the 33-car field, although some felt that was lenient.

In the race itself, nothing went Penske's way. Scott McLaughlin crashed even before the race began – shades of Roberto Guerrero, who managed similar from pole position back in 1992. Newgarden charged impressively into contention as he chased a third Indy 500 win on the bounce, but there was a palpable sense of relief when a fuel pressure problem thwarted his bid. No matter how hard-earned a victory it might have been, few outside the team wanted to see a Penske win this time.

PENSKE ENTERTAINMENT / GETTY IMAGES

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

Letter of the week

THERE'S NO SIMPLE FIX

So why are insurance premiums rising so much? One cause I can tell you from this week.

I was hit gently up the rear in my new electric Mini by a preoccupied driver in traffic, causing a two-inch crack to the rear bumper. The offender said she would like to settle privately, as the damage was apparently small. I made a quick trip to a Mini dealership for a quote: they said £4200, or more than 10% of the list price of the car, for a bit of plastic.

If it weren't a lease car, I would have had a smart repair done, but I dared not risk it in case I were to get penalised when returning it.

The list of replacement parts and procedures was endless, down to parking sensors that hadn't been touched, brackets that may or may not have been damaged and labour rates that would make your eyes boggle.

I will need to get an alternative quote from a local body shop, but even at half this figure (I'm guessing) it seems disproportionate.

David Chillingworth, via email

A DECADE OF PEACE

Great road test report on the new Toyota Land Cruiser (21 May), but while acknowledging the renowned reliability, you failed to mention that it's backed up by a 10-year/100,000-mile warranty that needs an annual service at a dealer to maintain. Given the complexity and cost of the vehicle, you're hardly going to deviate from a main dealer history anyway.

So yes, the Land Rover Defender is superb, but for a keeper, with added peace of mind, the Land Cruiser is very tempting.

Oh, and it's got lots of buttons, and that needs a round of applause.

Keith Godber
Harrogate, North Yorkshire

WOULD YOU RISK IT?

I couldn't believe Rachel Burgess's comment in her 14 May leader that "the core appeal of JLR models over the years has been the British flavour of their engineering".

JLR products have one of the worst records for reliability and engineering. How many times do we hear stories about how its cars break down, incur high repair costs and have a long customer backlogs and waiting list for parts? Not to mention eye-watering depreciation!

I certainly wouldn't buy a JLR car.

Stephen Ward
via email

THE WRONG IDEA

How can two such closely styled cars have such different levels of desirability? The new Nissan Micra is impossibly bland and contrived, particularly those catastrophic headlights, whereas the Renault 5 just nails its styling to be the car of the moment.

Why on earth would anyone choose the Micra, unless it has a massively cheaper price?

As Nissan was forced to use the 5 as its starting point, why didn't its designers channel the boxy Mk1 Micra of the late 1980s, which would have worked much better than trying to apply details from one of the most spherical-led car designs (the 2002 Mk3) onto a boxy base?

Brian
via autocar.co.uk

AN UGLY SISTER

The new Micra is like when someone copies someone else's homework but throws in a couple of mistakes to try to hide it…

Mikey C
via autocar.co.uk

WHAT BIG EYES YOU HAVE

The new Micra's designer says it's a "grandma car no more", but it looks like a grandma squinting through her glasses to see the TV. Weirdly less attractive than the Renault 5.

Joseph Lynn
via Facebook

DOUBLE DISCOUNT

I had my own experience of buying an ex-rental Ford Fiesta imported to the UK from Jersey, as recalled by Francis Samuels (14 May).

In my case, it was a 1988 Mk2 Fiesta XR2, white with no options, delivery mileage and much cheaper than a new UK-sourced car.

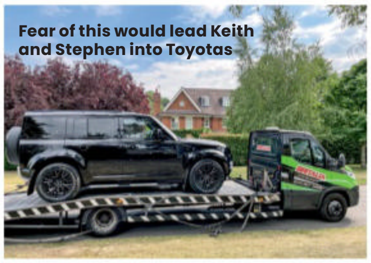
I purchased the car in August 1988, but the Southampton dealer warned me that it would be on an E registration, given that it was first registered in Jersey in June. Imagine my delight when it was registered by the local DVLA office as a new car with an F registration.

Shortly after, the dealership registered its entire stock of ex-Jersey rentals at the same local DVLA office, who applied the then current F registration to every car.

The benefit for me was that when I sold the car in 1990, I got back what I had paid for it. The dealership had seemingly forgotten that it was one of the cheap ex-rentals it had sold to me as a nearly new car in 1988.

Mike Osborne
Via email

There's no warm reception for the new Nissan Micra



Fear of this would lead Keith and Stephen into Toyotas

When did you last see one of these in action?

GET SWEEPING

Everyone is familiar with the terrible state of our roads, with massive potholes every 100 yards, but there is another problem caused by the lack of maintenance.

Over the past decade, I've had a puncture almost every year. Before that, despite driving more mileage, I had only two punctures in more than 20 years.

There must be more screws, nails and metal rubbish littering our highways than before. Could it be caused by a lack of road sweeping ?

My mother used to joke that they only swept the roads when council rates were due, but I'm not even sure they do it that often any more.

Some punctures can be repaired, but often they lead to costly replacement of tyres and more tyres added to the waste mountain. There is a cost to the environment and it's not our fault.

Peter Slegg
Bedfordshire

More than 300 UK local councils are members of the Association for Public Service Excellence. In its 2022 street cleansing survey, 60% of them said they expected to reduce their budget over the next five years by as much as 15%, primarily due to post-pandemic budget constraints. However, in its 2024 survey, 83% of them said they expected to increase their budget over the next five years by up to 10% – KC

STUBBED MY TOW

I enjoy my electric cars. I have a BMW iX as the best family car I have ever owned and drive it to the south of France with ease and a Mini EV as a runabout and a station car (of 2021 vintage; better than the new one for my use case) – although my fun car, a convertible for weekends and sunny days, does have a straight six.

I now need to tow a caravan and a car trailer occasionally, and I'm stuck. The iX has all the qualities of a perfect tow car (weight, torque, controllability), but its range seems likely to drop by more than 50% when towing, which makes it wholly impractical, as I have no intention of stopping every 100-150 miles.

Your 30 April news highlighted all the future Range Rovers going electric, which makes me wonder how everyone with a caravan, horsebox, car trailer and so forth is going to manage in the future. I can't imagine the government is going to make another exception for cars with a tow hook.

I also don't understand the physics. I previously had a Land Rover Discovery 3, and while its range dropped a bit when towing, the reduction was considerably less than the likely impact on my iX in the same circumstances. Why? And is this likely to be something that future EV development will resolve?

Michael Cauter
Woking, Surrey

Around half of an ICE car's fuel is used to make it hot and loud rather than to make it move, whereas more than 90% of the energy in an EV makes it move. Therefore any drag (whether aerodynamic or friction) put on the EV has a much bigger effect overall, because whatever drag you put on an ICE car is affecting only the half of the energy that makes it move – MP

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

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Next week's issue

ON SALE 11 JUNE

TRIPLE TEST

DEFENDER OCTA vs UNLIKELY RIVALS

Wildest Land Rover yet takes on the Ariel Nomad and Ford Mustang Mach-E Rally at a classic Rally GB venue

ROAD TEST

DACIA BIGSTER

New SUV has impressed – but now it faces the industry's toughest test

INVESTIGATION

RISE OF THE RANGE-EXTENDER EVs

Can REx technology finally deliver on its promise? We ask an expert

EVERY WEEK

FIRST DRIVE

AUDI A5 E-HYBRID

Executive liftback gains new PHEV powertrain with 67-mile EV range

USED GUIDE

VOLKSWAGEN T-ROC

Big-selling compact SUV is now a £7000 used bargain

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HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time - either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production spec. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

FIRST DRIVES

TESTED 27.5.25, BARCELONA, SPAIN **DELIVERIES** JUNE

RENAULT AUSTRAL

Qashqai rival receives comfort-focused update

Just two-and-a-half years on from its launch, the Renault Austral SUV has been given a refresh, gaining revised gearbox software, additional soundproofing and new dampers all fitted in a bid to improve mechanical refinement, cabin isolation and ride comfort respectively over those of the outgoing model.

The Austral sports a new grille design reminiscent of the Rafale, with diamond motifs embossed around the central logo. It has also adopted the brand's half-diamond daytime-running lights to bring it in line with its hybrid range-mates. Such revisions have certainly helped lift the Austral's look, which, at least to my eyes, has a sharper and more sporting aesthetic.

Trims remains the same: Techno, Techno Esprit Alpine and Iconic Esprit Alpine, with pricing expected to stay between £35,000 and £40,000.

Under the bonnet sits Renault's familiar E-Tech Full Hybrid powertrain, which in this application pairs a 129bhp 1.2-litre three-cylinder turbo petrol engine with a 67bhp front-mounted electric motor and a 34bhp integrated starter-generator. All in, it makes 197bhp and 302lb ft for a rather modest 8.4sec 0-62mph time.

Like the Rafale, the Austral pulls away in pure-EV mode, with the petrol triple springing to life when you ask for more gusto. Initial response from standstill is a bit underwhelming as the car attempts to move its 1538kg heft using only the electric motor.

Select Sport mode and there's more verve, with the engine and motor working in unison to deliver maximum power. This is especially handy when you're powering out of corners or overtaking.

Renault has updated the software for the Austral's 'multimodal' auto gearbox to improve responsiveness and iron out flat spots. You barely notice the car flicking between its two powertrains and, thanks to its large (1.7kWh) battery, you can cover meaningful distances in pure EV mode, even at higher speeds.

Hybrid system switches between petrol and electric power pretty seamlessly

“On twisty roads, it feels sure-footed and secure, and it flows nicely”

TESTER’S NOTE

While the regenerative braking works well and is easy to adjust via steering wheel paddles, the brake pedal is a bit over-sensitive and harder to modulate when both systems are working in unison. **SP**

Austral’s new seats are comfortable; Google-based tech is easy to use

Body control is good; the ride jostles a bit in town but is mostly composed

On a 100-mile test route, which generally took us on more rural roads, the Austral achieved around 39mpg, and it was closer to 43mpg on the motorway. That’s some way off Renault’s 58.9mpg claim, although it did cover 27 miles using electric power, and its 108g/km CO_2 figure remains competitive against its Kia Sportage and Nissan Qashqai rivals.

There’s still a bit of a pause before the gearbox finds the right ratio when you jump on the throttle. It gets pretty vocal under load, too, and even after you’ve lifted off the accelerator, the revs sometimes remain high before it eventually upshifts. That being said, the Austral’s engine doesn’t sound unrefined, and it’s well isolated, thanks to that additional soundproofing over the previous version. There’s still some vibration and grumble when the engine kicks into life, however. Road noise is well suppressed, but you will probably notice a hint of wind noise.

Inside, the Austral retains the upmarket feel of its predecessor. Perceived quality is strong, with soft-touch materials used throughout, while the blue-stitched Alcantara elements on the dash, doors and seats add a premium feel.

The real highlight, though, is the Google-based 12.3in touchscreen infotainment display, which is intuitive, responsive and easy to use. It’s logically configured, the icons are large and smartphone integration via Apple CarPlay and Android Auto is seamless. I also like the row of buttons and toggles for the climate controls, which sit beneath the screen.

It’s ergonomically strong up front: the new seats offer good lumbar and lateral support and a wide range of adjustability. The second row feels a bit more perched: your knees sit higher than you might expect. Adults won’t need to worry about leg room, but head room isn’t generous, not helped in this case by the optional panoramic roof.

A new feature for the facelift is that you can now slide the second row of seats forwards and back to trade rear leg room for boot volume. Doing so allows you to increase the total capacity from the standard 527 litres to 657 litres.

Our test car was fitted with Renault’s 4Control four-wheel steering, which also adds multi-link rear suspension, but this version won’t return to the UK and 4Control will no longer be available. Instead, UK-spec models will have a torsion-beam rear end.

Overall, the Austral is comfortable and pliant, softening out larger imperfections with control. At lower speeds around town, there’s some jostle and jounce as the passive set-up struggles to deal with potholes and sharp edges. There’s a bit of fuss and fidget at higher speeds, too, but it settles down into a cruise nicely.

On twisty roads, the Austral feels sure-footed and secure, and it flows nicely at moderate speeds. There’s a bit of initial lean, but the body is kept in check, and while the steering is light and lacking in feel in Comfort mode, switching to Sport adds an extra dose of weight and accuracy.

How this updated Austral will fare without four-wheel steering and with a more conventional chassis set-up remains to be seen, but initial impressions suggest that it has taken a step in the right direction.

SAM PHILLIPS

TECH SPEC

RENAULT AUSTRAL E-TECH FULL HYBRID ICONIC ESPRIT ALPINE

Shows signs of promise, with decent ride comfort and improved refinement

Price £39,000 (est)
Engine 3 cyls in line, 1197cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor and ISG
Power 197bhp
Torque 302lb ft
Gearbox 5-spd automatic (engine), 2-spd automatic (motor), FWD
Kerb weight 1538kg
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Top speed 111mph
Economy 58.9mpg
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Rivals Kia Sportage, Peugeot 3008

TESTED 15.5.25, BEDFORDSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

GWM HAVAL JOLION PRO

Chinese firm follows up Ora EV with mid-sized hybrid crossover for £24k

“WTF?” asked an Autocar reader last week, having seen a local dealership advertising the arrival of Haval’s Jolion Pro. This Chinese brand sure has made a very quiet arrival in the UK – although, to be fair, it isn’t technically a brand here (unlike in Australia, where incredibly it outsold Volkswagen in 2024). Instead, it’s a sub-brand of GWM, like Ora, which makes the 03 electric supermini – previously known in infamy as the Funky Cat.

So to be clear, GWM is the brand and Ora and Haval models are set to be joined in UK showrooms by more of their Chinese siblings in due course. All went quiet on the Wey front long ago, but perhaps you might fancy a Tank or a Poer...?

Yeah, GWM’s marketing strategy is confused. Or maybe the blame for that lies with International Motors, the Brummie firm that also handles UK imports for Isuzu, Subaru and Xpeng. But either way, we’re here to find out whether the Jolion Pro is a car that can speak for itself.

At 4470mm long and 1625mm tall, this is a medium-sized crossover that compares with the likes of the Kia Niro and Suzuki S-Cross. It’s being sold exclusively with a powertrain that comprises a naturally aspirated four-cylinder engine with a meagre 94bhp and an electric motor with a healthier 147bhp. A two-speed transmission switches the system between series and parallel hybrid modes, while the battery is 1.8kWh.

Pleasant interior is probably the car’s strongest suit

Suspension struggles to stay calm; powertrain isn’t too bad, though

Pricing starts at just £23,995, undercutting those aforementioned rivals by £5000 – even though the long list of standard kit includes a 7.0in digital dial display, a 12.3in touchscreen, parking sensors, a 360deg camera, LED headlights, an electrically adjustable driver’s seat, adaptive cruise control and all of the ADAS. Weirdly not DAB radio, though. But you can use Apple CarPlay or Android Auto for that.

The interior is actually a fairly pleasant place to be. None of the materials feel nasty and there’s plenty of space in both the front and back. There are even some buttons, albeit not as many as I would like, given that the infotainment menus aren’t the easiest to navigate. Its graphical style looks outdated as well. Much more problematic is the boot capacity: a scant 255 litres, compared with more than 400 litres in all of its hybrid crossover rivals.

Those rivals are notably better to drive too. The Jolion Pro’s two power sources can provide a decent amount of punch and play together nicely, but the engine makes you pay for heavier throttle inputs with a loud, hairdryer-esque whirring, and it’s not hard to overwhelm the grip limits of the Kumho rubber.

The ride is always busy as well, jostling you around on scruffy surfaces and thunking through potholes, and nor does the chassis offer either feelsome steering or confidence-inspiring handling.

My test drive wasn’t long enough for any reliable learnings about fuel economy, but plenty of other cars don’t need electrical assistance to achieve its official 47.0mpg, while the MG ZS Hybrid+ offers 55mpg.

It’s coincidental, I’m sure, but the Jolion Pro in essence feels like a Subaru Crosstrek without the off-road excellence – the one thing that really justifies choosing a Subaru these days. Ergo it’s mediocre at best in every area. It may be cheap, and its rivals may not be jaw-droppers, but the satisfaction of life with a superior product would surely be worth the extra outlay.

KRIS CULMER

TECH SPEC

GWM HAVAL JOLION PRO HYBRID ULTRA

Not irredeemable but doesn’t really impress in any regard, even if it does heavily undercut established rivals

Price £29,995
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1497cc, petrol, plus electric motor
Power 186bhp
Torque 277lb ft
Gearbox 2-spd automatic, FWD
Kerb weight 1595kg
0-62mph 9.0sec
Top speed 102mph
Economy 47.0mpg
CO_2, tax band 133g/km, 32%
Rivals Kia Niro, MG ZS, Suzuki S-Cross

TESTER’S NOTE

“Hi, GWM,” I said. “I’m coming!” the car’s voice assistant replied. “*Are* you coming...?” I asked, amused. “Please use the language of civilised norms!” she rebuked. Ooh, matron... **KC**

HAVAL
JOLION HEV

UK VERDICTS

TESTER'S NOTE
The mandatory auto 'box can be specced in regular or Sport tune. Sport basically just alters the shifting points. Its acceleration and emissions remain the same, though. **MSc**

TESTED 22.5.25, COTSWOLDS **DELIVERIES** NOW

BMW 2 SERIES COUPE

Updated two-door still offers six cylinders and RWD – but not together

Six-cylinder, rear-wheel-drive compact coupés from BMW are things of joy. 3.0 CSL? Wunderbar. E46 M3? Fantastisch. 1 Series M? Ja! But today, BMW makes you spring for a full-fat M2 if you want a new one. The 230i is rear-wheel drive but has only four cylinders, while the six-cylinder M240i is available only with four-wheel drive. You can have a rear-wheel-drive, six-cylinder 8 Series Coupé, but that is enormous.

Does this matter in the wider scheme of things? I suspect to us, reader, it does. Straight sixes are inherently smoother, torquier and more balanced than four-bangers, and they sound good too – and all of this should matter in a BMW.

Yet… The 230i's engine is smooth, torquey, powerful and sounds pretty good, if a bit muffled. Boot it coming out of a T-junction and there's enough power to raise the traction control from its slumber and the 0-62mph scamper is over and done in less than six seconds, which is plenty, really, if you're not after a serious sports car.

In-gear acceleration is strong, there's no hugely notable drop-off of pace while you're doing legal speeds and the 295lb ft of torque is measured out neatly, although it does feel a bit like it's running out of puff by 6000rpm.

The 2 Series Coupé has had a bit of work done to it lately. Cosmetically this consists of a new front end, side skirts painted in the body colour, a new rear diffuser and updated wheel and paint options.

This car didn't really need much changing mechanically, and this 230i (along with the less powerful four-cylinder 220i) comes with non-adaptive M Sport suspension.

It's a firm set-up that perhaps jars a bit too much over potholes, but it's fine, taut and communicative the rest of the time.

The steering is pretty quick but has an angle-dependent rack that ensures that it doesn't feel nervous.

ZF's eight-speed torque converter shepherds the power with ease and when left to its own devices is wonderfully smooth. The shift paddles are also super quick to respond, even though they are small and feel plasticky.

Inside the car, there has been a significant change: it now features BMW's huge, crisp digital display, comprising a 12.3in instrument display and a 14.9in infotainment touchscreen. Which means the temperature controls are no longer on dials and knobs; they're on icons locked to the bottom of the touchscreen. They're well sited and responsive, but still…

I'm assured there have been lots of changes to the ambient lighting too, if that's your bag.

Most importantly, the low-seating position has been maintained along with BMW's thick-rimmed M wheel.

Fit and finish is probably slightly above Mercedes' and ergonomically, apart from the heating controls, it's all spot on. Rear leg room is poor and adults wouldn't want to cover a long journey in the rear, but this car is billed as a 2+2, to be fair.

The 230i is an intriguing choice in this latest 2 Series Coupé line-up. The 220i (with 181bhp) is perhaps a touch too underpowered to make use of its racy seating position and rear-wheel-drive layout, while the six-cylinder M240i has one too many driven axles for purists. Is the 230i the sweet spot, then? Perhaps if you look at things pragmatically. But the allure of the coming-on-for legendary B58 six-cylinder might be too strong for enthusiasts who aren't purists and don't strictly need a rear-wheel-drive set-up.

MURRAY SCULLION

TECH SPEC

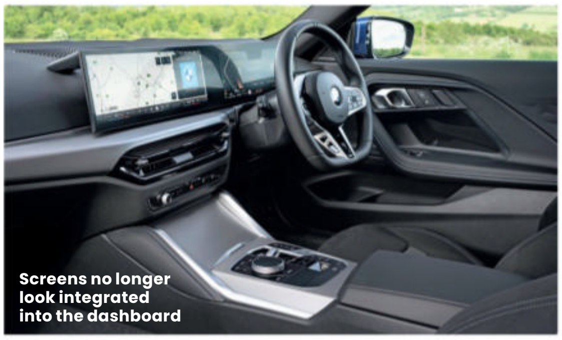
BMW 230i M SPORT COUPE

Still a fantastic prospect for buyers after a traditional, slightly flash two-door with a sensible side

★★★★☆

Price £40,320
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1998cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol
Power 241bhp at 4500rpm
Torque 295lb ft at 1600rpm
Gearbox 8-spd automatic, RWD
Kerb weight 1600kg
0-62mph 5.9sec
Top speed 155mph
Economy 41.5mpg
CO_2, tax band 155g/km, 37%
Rivals Mazda MX-5 RF 2.0 Skyactiv-G, Mercedes-Benz CLE 200 Coupé

The 230i rides firmly, but not tiresomely so like the M2



Screens no longer look integrated into the dashboard

TESTED 22.5.25, COTSWOLDS **DELIVERIES** NOW

MINI ACEMAN JCW

Mini turns up the wick on its electric-only compact SUV

"Confident driving on unknown roads." This message popped into the car's head-up-display while we had it on test. It's nearly beautiful, almost like a haiku or sonnet. At the time I was left wondering whether the Mini was being complimentary or maybe a bit pass-agg. Perhaps it's a sort of polite Britishness born of the Aceman's Oxford roots, or it's a case of 'lost in translation' from where the car is actually built, 5000 miles or so east of Cowley, in Zhangjiagang, China. Either way, it's an oddly polite ode for such a little tearaway.

The Aceman JCW uses the same electric powertrain as the Mini JCW, meaning a single motor, front-wheel drive and 255bhp. It can manage 0-62mph in 6.4sec, so around half a second slower than the hatch but nearly a second quicker than the next quickest Aceman. A 49.2kWh (usable) battery and 3.8mpkWh combine for a WLTP range of 214 miles. Max charging is 95kW for DC and 11kW for AC, which isn't that impressive at all, really. DC charging time from 0-80% is 31 minutes, while AC from 0-100% is five hours and 30 minutes. Its rivals offer more range and faster charging.

Weirdly, though, you can almost forgive it. For actual fun I'd choose a rambunctious front-wheel-drive Mini over a four-wheel-drive twin-motor something-or-other any time. A Smart #1 with a motor on

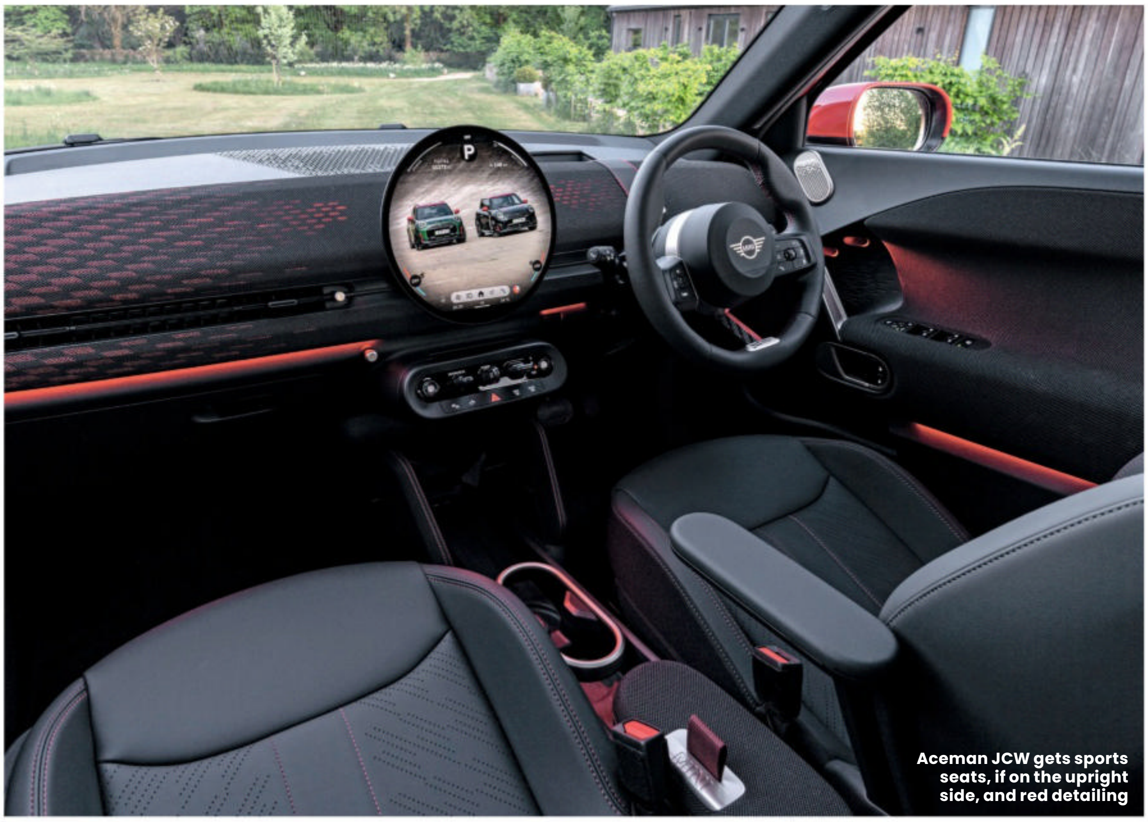
Aceman JCW shares its 255bhp powertrain with the hot three-door

each axle does 0-62mph in under four seconds. But so what? You'd do it once then never bother again because it isn't that rewarding to drive, whereas the Aceman is a proper piece of kit: squat, somewhat inelastic, a bit gauche. Its athletic gait is super-grippy on smooth roads, but find some imperfections and that grip is replaced by good old-fashioned torque steer. It's actually quite endearing in a #throwbackthursday kind of way, but I wonder if this would grate in actual ownership. The steering just off the straight-ahead isn't too jumpy – inherited from its slower Aceman brethren – meaning it's good for motorway work. But once you're past that initial movement and feed in a bit of lock it can become a bit unsteady.

New for JCW is a boost function. It's a fun little paddle on the left-hand side of the steering wheel. You need to be in John Cooper Works mode (née Go-Kart mode), and it unleashes an additional 27bhp for 10 seconds – this is the only way to deploy the car's full 255bhp. You get a small countdown clock, and I did notice a bit more oomph when using it, especially from low speeds. Confusingly, you can just spam the rocker switch and get the countdown forever. So I think you could use the car's full power all of the time, but it would be tiresome doing so; it's not like it's slow without it. Speed dulls after 60mph, but you certainly wouldn't wince at overtakes on the motorway.

Ride? This is perhaps where it gets most interesting. I'm running an Aceman long-termer at the moment, the small-battery model. That car almost feels like it was designed entirely for the larger-battery model that will make up the majority of its sales. And as such, the bigger-batteried Aceman rides better than the smaller and, more importantly, lighter model. And this JCW Aceman isn't night-and-day worse-riding than the standard one.

Both Mini JCW and Aceman JCW get a new suspension set-up that includes more negative camber on the front wheels. It's very aggressive – too aggressive in the three-door for my liking. But in the Aceman, with its longer suspension travel, this configuration actually works a bit better. The three-door can be a real challenge to keep on the straight and narrow, such is its hunger for seemingly seeking out ruts and bumps and consequently sinking its teeth into them. But the Aceman just seems to be less ▸


Aceman JCW gets sports seats, if on the upright side, and red detailing

Gloss black side skirts extend round the back into the JCW's diffuser

"The Aceman JCW is a proper piece of kit: squat, somewhat inelastic, a bit gauche"

TESTER'S NOTE

Mini loves an options pack. But the Level 1 pack is standard on this JCW, getting you heated seats and a head-up display. **MSc**

“The Aceman JCW is 75-80% as much fun as the three-door JCW, but it’s more practical”

◂ drawn to the crappier bits of roads in the first place, and it is then less tied down when it does negotiate them. Braking is strong, easy to modulate and consistent, although the pedal itself can feel somewhat soft.

Inside, save for the sports seats and red and black detailing, it’s very similar to the regular Aceman. You still sit high up and you still get a captain’s chair (upright, with a large, firm armrest). The 24cm circular infotainment screen is bright, clear and easy to use, but it houses nearly everything, including the heating controls. Painted brake calipers, red, white and black (like a chequered flag) JCW logos, gloss black side skirts, diffusers, attention-grabbing 19in alloy wheels and a rear spoiler are telltale signs that this is a JCW product. But then again, you can make a regular Aceman look like this too, with a JCW styling pack.

Apparently, the little cryptic messages the Aceman shows on its head-up display only appear when you’re pushing on. It’s something to do with the lane keeping assist and ignoring it too much when cornering over white lines. If I was to return the favour, something like ‘not enough battery, likely only to be useful as a second car’ would appear on its HUD.

The 200-ish-mile range and lack of fast charging (or 22kW charging) is something you can’t ignore. It relegates this SUV to supplementary use only, which is unsteady ground for something so tall and family-shaped. A three-door Mini you can kind of forgive as a second, fun car, but an SUV? It’s a stretch. Which is a shame, because this JCW perhaps makes more sense than the three-door. Ultimately the Aceman JCW is probably 75-80% as much fun as the three-door JCW, while also being larger, more practical and about 50% more comfortable in the real world. But it isn’t quite special enough to be a weekend car.

MURRAY SCULLION

It’s at its best on smooth roads but doesn’t react too badly to negative cambers

Smart 19in alloys continue the JCW branding theme

Aceman is much more family-friendly than a three-door Mini

TECH SPEC

MINI ACEMAN JOHN COOPER WORKS

Fast, fun and slightly unhinged little electric SUV is ultimately let down by a harsh ride and limited range

★★★⯪☆

Price £40,920
Engine Permanent magnet synchronous motor
Power 255bhp
Torque 258lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
Kerb weight 1825kg
0-62mph 6.4sec
Top speed 124mph
Battery 54.2/49.2kWh (total/usable)
Range, economy 214 miles, 3.8mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 3%
Rivals Abarth 600e, Smart #1 Brabus

TESTED 19.5.25, NORTH YORKSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

AUDI A3 SPORTBACK 40 TFSIe

Perennially popular premium hatchback returns in plug-in hybrid form

A3 turns in eagerly and handles well, and the ride is pretty decent

Revised trim materials give an uptick in quality; driving position is excellent

The A3 is the Audi most British buyers want, if you check the latest sales figures, so a suite of recent mid-life improvements should only add to its popularity. Audi offers more than a dozen different models here, but one in five cars it sells is an A3.

Late last year Audi reintroduced a plug-in hybrid model in Germany, right-hand-drive versions of which are now available here. The whole A3 range is improved in many detail ways, with better-quality interior trim, modernised grille and lights and tweaks to the standard equipment. But the really big deal occurs in the PHEV, whose electric-only range is doubled to between 80 and 87 miles, depending on which of three trim levels you choose. Our test car was a Black Edition, the best-looking version with the nattiest wheels and smallest – but still generous – battery range.

All PHEVs now have a meaty, boot-mounted lithium ion battery with just under 20kWh of usable power, which means that for many owners with home chargers, trips to a filling station will be so rare that they might even risk having the fuel in their petrol tanks going stale in some conditions (some experts say fuel can start oxidising within four to six weeks).

That aside, the A3 40 TFSIe is unlikely to be anything other than miserly on fuel. The increasingly ridiculous 'official' WLTP consumption figures for this car now run to a fanciful 900mpg-plus, and the CO_2 output is a similarly irrelevant 9g/km. Even on our own test, on a 40-mile, briskly driven, give-and-take Yorkshire route where the battery grunt used to climb hills was partly replaced by regeneration on the way down, the car returned to base with its fuel consumption meter showing an apparently remarkable 200mpg.

It's popular for car haters to accuse PHEVs of polluting more than their official figures show but, while there is some validity to that criticism, this big-batteried A3 certainly shows the potential that plug-in hybrids have for reducing transport-generated CO_2 over the next decade.

The powertrain does other good things. The 1.5-litre TFSI engine is quiet and smooth, and working with the 114bhp electric motor set within its six-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox, it delivers decent if not bitumen-burning performance: 7.4sec 0-62mph acceleration and a 140mph top speed. The motorway cruise is especially long-legged and refined. We suspect that on a cruise of several hundred miles, fuel consumption might be realistic at 55-65mpg, although there's the option, via switchable settings, to consume electric power straight away, or to let it assist over many miles as the on-board brain sees fit, or to preserve (and even replenish) the battery charge for use later in a journey.

The A3 TFSIe has other advantages that shade pure EVs of the same size. It has a near-perfect driving position, uncorrupted by a big traction battery under the cabin. It feels compact to drive and weighs 'only' 1.6 tonnes at the kerb. It's no featherweight, but that's 400-500kg less than an EV would weigh. There's an obvious benefit in cornering turn-in – the A3 has always handled well; this one maintains the tradition – and the ride quality is a nicely judged amalgam of control and suppleness, with none of the pitching that affects most EVs of this size.

In short, the A3 TFSIe makes a fine choice for UK roads and conditions, even if smaller-name marques are cheaper. It's agile, looks impressive, is extremely easy on fuel – electric or fossil – and is always fun to drive. Easy to see why this is one of the most popular Audis, and it is likely to remain so.

STEVE CROPLEY

TECH SPEC

AUDI A3 SPORTBACK 40 TFSIe BLACK EDITION

Big-batteried PHEV model makes the A3 even more important to the UK's dominant business market

★★★★½

Price £45,110
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1498cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor
Power 201bhp at 5000-6000rpm
Torque 184lb ft at 1500-4000rpm
Gearbox 6-spd dual-clutch automatic, FWD
Kerb weight 1600kg
0-62mph 7.4sec
Top speed 140mph
Battery 19.7kWh (usable)
Economy 941.6mpg
Electric range 80 miles
CO_2, tax band 9g/km, 6%
Rivals Mercedes-Benz A250e, Volkswagen Golf eHybrid

TESTER'S NOTE

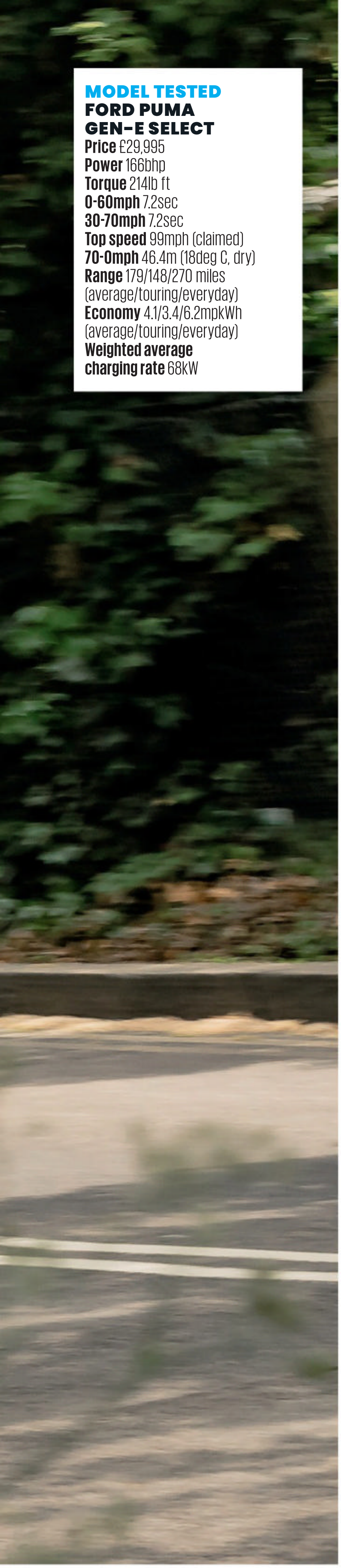
This update to the A3 includes a clever and effective upgrade to interior materials and gadgetry that simplifies controls and dispels previous impressions of iffy interior quality. **SC**

ROAD TESTS

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5752**

FORD PUMA

How does the arrival of pure-electric power suit the UK's top-selling car?



MODEL TESTED
FORD PUMA GEN-E SELECT
Price £29,995
Power 166bhp
Torque 214lb ft
0-60mph 7.2sec
30-70mph 7.2sec
Top speed 99mph (claimed)
70-0mph 46.4m (18deg C, dry)
Range 179/148/270 miles (average/touring/everyday)
Economy 4.1/3.4/6.2mpkWh (average/touring/everyday)
Weighted average charging rate 68kW

Few of the many other cars we test in 2025 will carry the significance of this week's road test subject. Yes, the Ford Puma Gen-E is just another all-electric compact crossover, and there have been quite a few of those released in the past couple of years. But the difference here is that the combustion-engined version happens to be the UK's best-selling car. We therefore know that the fundamental Puma recipe is one that many people love, and Ford will be hoping those existing Puma owners will be among the first in line to swap petrol for electric.

It will be interesting to observe the extent to which that actually happens. The enormous popularity of the petrol Puma means this Gen-E model is something of a litmus test for broader attitudes toward EVs at the more affordable end of the market. Ford executives expect the Gen-E to make up 10-15% of total Puma sales, and if it's less than that, we will know the reason lies not in the basic product but in the manner of its propulsion. You can rest assured that other competitors in this class, and also beyond, will be taking notes.

Of course, the Puma Gen-E is also pivotal to Ford, whose EV roll-out hasn't been straightforward. Its first full-blooded EV, the Mustang Mach-E, was not without merit but was expensive. Next up was the Explorer – a serviceable family EV spun off the platform used by the Volkswagen ID 4 and therefore without much real Ford DNA in it. As much became apparent when we drove one. The dynamic package didn't have that sparkle about it, as the Focus – the car the Explorer is all but superseding – always did.

It means the Puma Gen-E is only the second serious, fully in-house EV Ford has made (we're excluding the toe-in-the-water Focus Electric of 2011 and the much more esoteric F-150 Lightning here). It arrives not before time too. Other car makers have had footholds in the small EV arena for some time and the Puma's rivals now include the Jeep Avenger, the Skoda Elroq, the Smart #1, the sizeable MG S5 EV and the more premium Volvo EX30, not to mention the formidable Renault 5 and the Kia EV3. Some of these cars undercut the Puma Gen-E's £29,995 starting price, while others justify their higher cost with extra space and some degree of opulence.

The question is where this pivotal and potentially likeable Ford slots in to the class hierarchy. Let's find out.

Mach-E started Ford's new EV era in UK

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★½☆

PROS Still quite an attractive car; not as heavy as it might have been
CONS Limited battery capacity with no long-range option on the cards

The Gen-E is built alongside the 'regular' Puma in Ford's Craiova plant in Romania, and visually there's scant difference between the two. The new variant has the EV-typical covered-off grille and naturally there are no tailpipes, but otherwise the appearance is unchanged, but for two exclusive colour options (Electric Yellow and Digital Aqua Blue, for £800). The technical specification does suggest that the EV rides a fraction higher than its ICE sibling, although the difference is slight, and with the same body-in-white, the kerbside stance of the two cars is identical.

The chassis is an adaptation of the Ford Global B-car platform that underpins the petrol Puma, and indeed served beneath the fine-handling Fiesta before the supermini was retired. At this price, it's not unusual for this approach to be taken, although certain rivals do use a dedicated electric platform. The more expensive EX30 gets one (its Sustainable Experience Architecture is loosely shared with everything from the #1 to the Lotus Eletre in the Geely stable), as does anything from the Volkswagen Group, and also the Renault 5.

Along the floor sits an NMC battery pack with 43.6kWh of usable capacity. If that sounds on the modest side, that's because it is. Among entry-level rivals from Mini, Renault, Volvo and Kia, the least you will find is 49.0kWh and some of those cars have a 'long-range' option for even more capacity – something Ford so far insists it won't offer for the Gen-E.

It drives a 166bhp, front-mounted permanent magnet synchronous motor built at Ford's Halewood factory, which last year came online after a £380 million redevelopment and will create electric drive units for 70% of the firm's Europe-sold EVs. So far there's no talk of a more powerful Gen-E derivative (an ST is the obvious candidate), but the existing car's output certainly leaves head room, given that petrol Pumas have had as much at 197bhp.

The rest of the hardware is broadly the same as for the petrol version, with MacPherson-strut suspension at the front and a torsion bar rear, controlled by coil springs and passive dampers. The set-up has been subject to a comprehensive retune, however, on account of the Gen-E's considerably lower centre of gravity and increased kerb weight. We were unable to weigh the car on this occasion, but Ford's claim of 1488kg makes the Gen-E 283kg heavier than the 1.0-litre mild-hybrid Puma we tested in 2020. With the driver on board, it means this crossover supermini treads the scales at well beyond 1500kg. Amazingly, this compares fairly well with rivals. A Renault 5 is a touch lighter, but an EX30 and a Mini Aceman are considerably heavier than the Ford.

■ Select is the lower of the two grades and comes with a less racy but, in our opinion, more attractive wheel than you get with Premium trim. It's also an inch smaller, at 17in, so you get a higher profile for the eco-minded tyre, to the benefit of all-round ride comfort.

Ford
EJ25 HJU

■ Visually, the electric Puma is largely indistinguishable from its combustion siblings but for the grille, which is filled in, as you so often see with electric cars (Ford's larger Explorer and Mustang Mach-E EVs included). At the back there's also, of course, no sign of tailpipes.

INTERIOR

★★★★☆

PROS Cavernous boot; cockpit ergonomics; digital capabilites
CONS Rear leg room is tight; cost-cutting materials are conspicuous

The Gen-E's trump card from an interior perspective is an unusual one for electric cars: luggage space. If you include the Gigabox – a large, drainable recess beneath the adjustable-height boot floor – there's 523 litres of capacity, which is nothing short of colossal for a car in this segment (and at the more compact end of it, at that). The Gen-E also benefits from a frunk, which is useful for cables, and the boot can be opened electrically, which feels pleasingly grown-up.

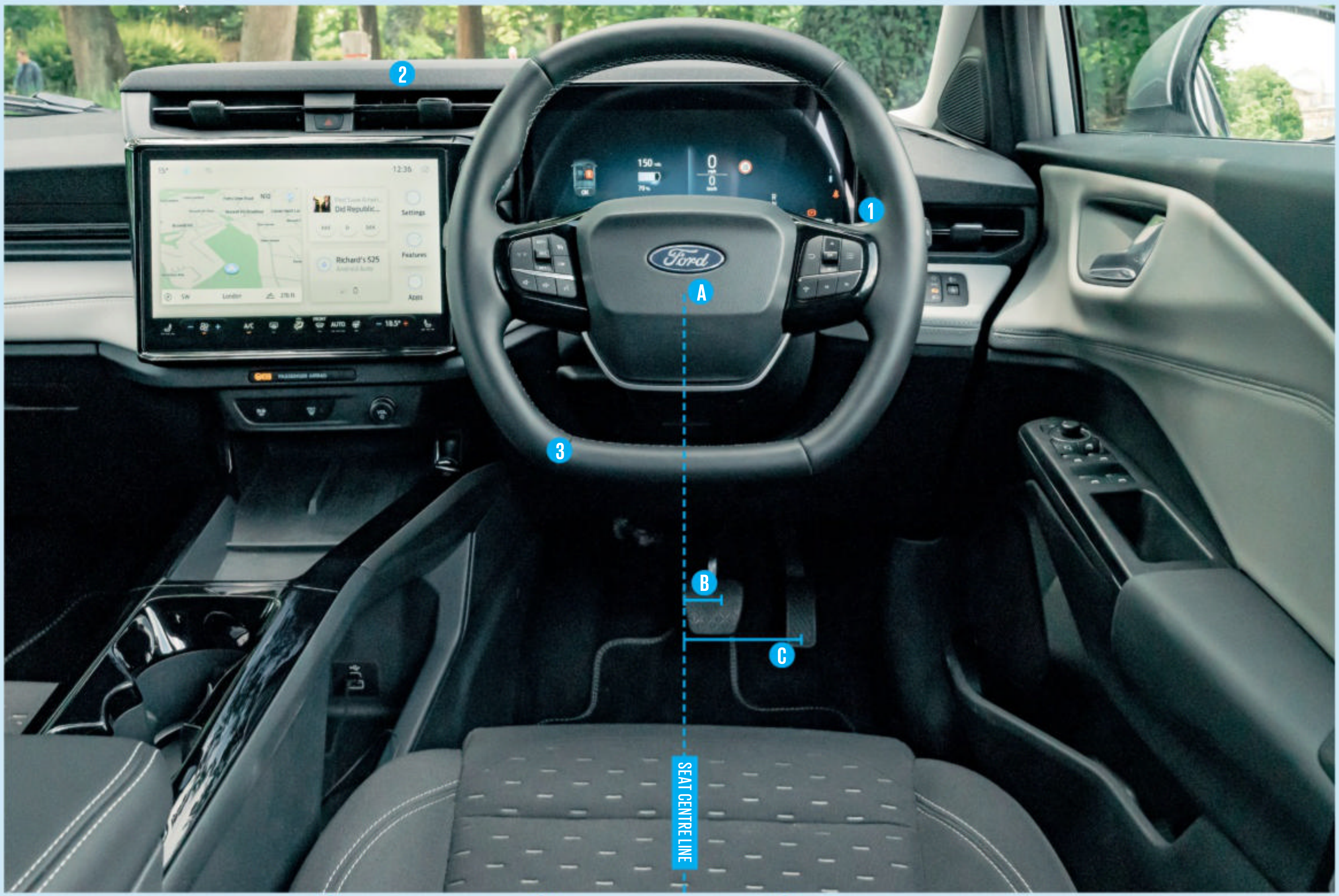
Inevitably, the driving position does feel perched, and the car's raised floor poses greater problems in the back because Ford has neglected to add cut-outs for your feet, which can make it difficult ▸

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EDLESTON

① Gear selector borrows from the Mercedes (and lately also VW) playbook and takes the form of a stalk, saving space on the centre console that ICE Pumas clutter with a big lever.

② Dashboard is a tale of two halves. The upper is a very cheap-feeling black plastic – not what you'd want in a £30k car. The light grey portions are soft to the touch and feel decently premium.

③ Squared-off rim won't be for everyone but is nice enough to hold, being firm and slim. The switchgear on the spokes also feels solid – better than anything capacitative, certainly.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 30mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 140mm right. Driving position is fundamentally fine, with a lot of adjustability in the steering reach, which isn't a given in this class. The view of the instruments is first-rate.

◂ to slip them under the seat in front (for your information, this tester wore New Balance trainers – hardly disco slippers but not chunky).

Head room is good, mind, although in general the Gen-E can't touch the EV3, which remains the obvious choice if you regularly need to cart teenagers about in the back.

Up front, the Gen-E sports the layout of the updated petrol Puma, which blends surprisingly plush trim with conspicuously cheap plastics and includes two large digital displays, the central one of which contains all the climate control commands, albeit in a fixed row along the bottom. It runs Ford's Sync 4 software, although Android Auto and Apple CarPlay both connect wirelessly, even if the visual integration isn't too slick.

In general, the Gen-E's cockpit lacks the visual flair, build quality and tactility of the Renault 5's, but it has a maturity about it as well as fundamentally good ergonomics (the steering column has huge reach adjustment) and plenty of oddment storage, including a split-level centre console with two USB ports on the lower deck, to hide cables.

As for the driver, in some ways that higher hip-point detracts from the Gen-E experience to a greater extent than it might in a rival with no pretence of being 'fun to drive'. The petrol Puma always felt inherently 'right' as soon as you slid into its neatly bolstered seats.

Even so, this is a good cockpit, with subtly dished, comfy seats. Moreoever, not only is there that adjustment in the steering column, but the relationship between the pedals and seat is also well judged and the slim, firm steering rim is satisfying to hold. It also allows a clear view of the digital display ahead of you, which is controlled via spoke-mounted buttons that have a nice feeling of solidity about them. The column stalks also feel more robust than you often find in this class, and using the right-hand arm as the gear selector comes naturally enough after a short while.

Elsewhere, with its optional Winter and Comfort packages, our entry-level Select test car didn't feel at all bargain basement, although the Premium grade does add a Bang & Olufsen sound system as well as Sensico synthetic leather seat trim.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

PROS Competitive straight-line speed; sensible power delivery
CONS No true freewheeling option; outright stopping distances

You're not forced to endure any synthetic sonic enhancements if you don't want to, but the Gen-E's selectable accelerator sound is rather good. For a start, it's subtle. It comes from the correct place too, emanating not from the dashboard ahead but somewhere low and behind you. The note is also quite enjoyable, being reminiscent of the three-pot burble of the old Puma ST but with a bassiness in the vein of air-cooled Porsche 911s and, as speeds increase, a higher-frequency element a bit like that of the V6 in a Ferrari 296 GTB. Strange but true.

The performance level is also exactly where you would want it to be in a sprightly, small EV without overtly sporty pretensions but with a bit of driver appeal. At MIRA, the sprint to 60mph took 7.2sec, which isn't quick but certainly isn't slow, either. Tip-in acceleration is also delivered sensibly, with a gratifying sharpness that never overspills into hair-trigger jerkiness. You can choose from a couple of modes that vary this sort of thing, but the Gen-E always feels intuitive. Our only real criticism is that you can't mix and match. It would be useful to have the crisp accelerator pick-up of Sport mode while retaining the easygoing, fingertippy steering calibration you get in Normal mode.

As is the norm in this class, there isn't a vast array of regeneration braking options or paddles with which to vary the strength of the system on the fly, but you can go into the menus and select a (slightly grabby) 'one-pedal' mode that ramps up the regen considerably. In normal driving, there are two settings, the default being close to a freewheeling mode and moderately strong 'L' mode selected via the drive selector stalk.

Meanwhile, outright braking performance wasn't especially impressive during our tests (the Renault 5 stops more keenly), but the pedal feel is mostly good. The handover from regenerative to physical braking has been carefully considered, it seems.

HANDLING & STABILITY

★★★★⯪

PROS Well sorted, with a fine balance; nicely sped steering
CONS Not quite fun enough to replace your old Fiesta ST, alas

A showdown with the Renault 5 beckons, because the Gen-E handles very agreeably by class standards. Given that underneath the crossover-lite body and the electric powertrain sits more or less the same platform as the old Fiesta, this shouldn't come as a surprise. What's encouraging is that the Fiesta's enthusiasm for turning in to corners, and its well-judged balance of fun-invoking roll and neat control, has largely survived the transition from supermini to far heavier, taller, electric crossover. The Gen-E is good to drive.

Much of this stems from the steering. For this kind of car, you need to temper your expectations in respect of feel and communication, but do that and you will find the Puma rack's crisp off-centre pacing satisfying, with an enjoyable lightness that stops short of feeling disconnected. It's an engaging helm and, as with the petrol Puma, means the Gen-E is fun to put down all manner of roads at everything from a canter to a committed lick.

Helping matters is the fact that the Gen-E will have a better weight distribution than the petrol Puma, hardly a nose-heavy car itself in the first place. The EV is conspicuously well balanced and cannily damped, which not only makes it easy to place but also allows the chassis to claw considerable lateral grip out of its efficiency-minded tyres. With 166bhp, there was never going to be any need for a limited-slip differential, as the old Puma ST had, but even with that car's 197bhp output, we doubt the Gen-E would need mechanical intervention to remain hooked up. This a neat, cohesive car to drive, with a good sense of flow and personality.

COMFORT & ISOLATION

★★★⯪☆

PROS Entry-level car is surprisingly pliant, easygoing company
CONS Be careful about having the bigger wheels

The Gen-E uses a torsion-bar back axle where several rivals have fully independent rear suspension, which might be a concern for some. Equally, at this point Ford knows a thing or two about setting up a smallish hatchbacks, and we found our Select test car to ride well enough despite its comparatively ordinary mechanical layout, even at low speeds. Note, however, that the entry-level Gen-E tested here wears 17in wheels with generous sidewalls. Premium-grade cars have 18in wheels with shorter sidewalls, and in our experience this can make a noticeable difference to compliance on a small wheelbase.

Still, we can only assess the car we've driven and, by class standards, the Gen-E Select cushions sharp impacts (potholes and the like) surprisingly well for a car with such engaging handling and it also exhibits a fine long-wave gait on motorways – although you won't be spending too much time on those, as we will come to soon.

The Gen-E is refined enough too. Its 66dBA at a 70mph cruise is an exact match for the larger (and independently suspended) Skoda Elroq, as well as the considerably more expensive Mini Aceman SE Exclusive we've previously tested.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★★☆

PROS Stellar 'everyday' efficiency; basic car is well equipped
CONS Cruising range is poor for the price; Renault 5 does it all for less

Ford has taken its time to deliver a sub-£30,000 EV, but the Gen-E is, finally, that car – so long as you go for the entry-level Select without any options whatsoever. (Add £2000 to go for Premium grade.) In fairness, doing so won't leave you bereft of kit. You might want to spec an option pack or two for heated seats and a fancier sound system, but even if you don't, you still get the Sync 4 infotainment, the digital instruments, wireless phone charging and a rear-view camera. It puts the Gen-E in an interesting position, usefully undercutting some of the premium brands but starting at a noticeably higher price than the Renault 5, which has to be considered this car's chief rival.

In terms of usability, the small battery capacity should concern anybody undertaking longer drives on a regular basis. Our test car's 3.4mpkWh at 70mph isn't poor, but with just 43.6kWh to draw from, it translates to a motorway range of only 148 miles. Public charging can be done at up to a claimed 100kW, which is par for the class, but we saw a considerable drop-off in speed from a 50% state of charge (SoC) onwards, and a weighted average of 68kW for the 10%-90% SoC period. The Renault 5 has the same maximum charging speed but maintained a quicker rate for longer. However, the Gen-E aced our 'everyday' economy test for low- to medium-speed routes, averaging 6.2mpkWh. That should give you a strong 270-mile day-to-day range.

Because we're dealing with a small crossover here, that's probably a compromise most Gen-E owners will be prepared to make. Ford is also offering a free home charger in partnership with Octopus Energy and 'up to 10,000 miles' of charging credit if you opt for the Intelligent Octopus Go tariff, though only for cars bought before the end of June. There's five years' free servicing on offer too, although the likes of Kia, Hyundai and MG all offer longer vehicle warranties. ▸

FRONT Leg room 1080mm, head room 990mm. By our tape measure, head room is a little shorter in the EV than the petrol Puma, but it's still fine.

REAR Leg room 670mm, head room 840mm. Second row is cosy, as per the class, but the higher floor means foot space can feel pretty compromised.

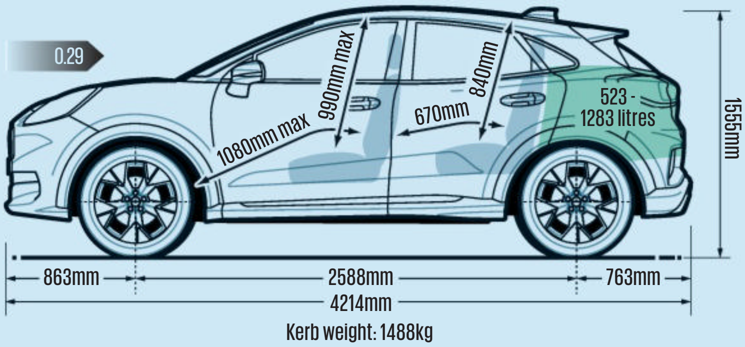
BOOT Length 710-1500mm, width 1000mm, height 410-820mm. Boot has a massive cavity under its adjustable-height floor. Very useful indeed.

"It's fun to punt it along, from a canter to a committed lick"

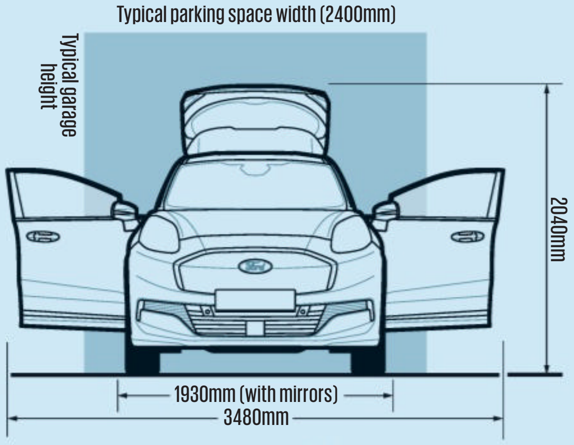
TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS

Length 4214mm **Width** 1930/1805mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1555mm **Door span** 3480mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2040mm


0.29
1080mm max
990mm max
670mm
840mm
523 - 1283 litres
1555mm
863mm
2588mm
763mm
4214mm
Kerb weight: 1488kg

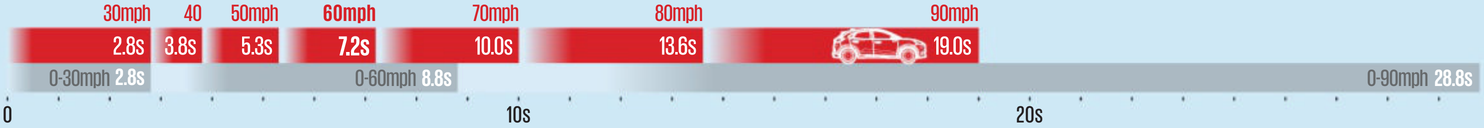
PARKING


Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
2040mm
1930mm (with mirrors)
3480mm

ACCELERATION

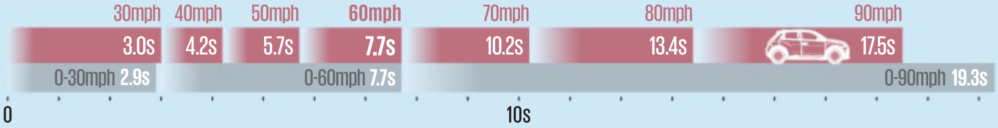
Test conditions 18deg C, dry

Standing quarter mile 16.0sec at 84.9mph **Standing km** 30.1sec at 101.4mph **30-70mph** 7.2sec **50-80mph** 8.3sec **0-62mph** 7.7sec



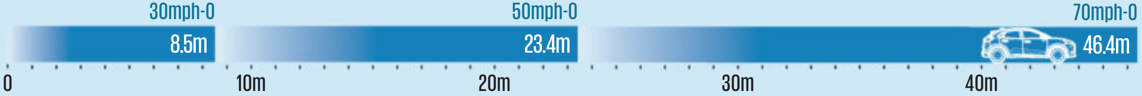
Renault 5 Comfort Range Iconic Five (2025, 5deg C, dry)

Standing quarter mile 16.1sec at 87.0mph **Standing km** 30.5sec at 94.0mph **30-70mph** 7.2sec **50-80mph** 7.6sec

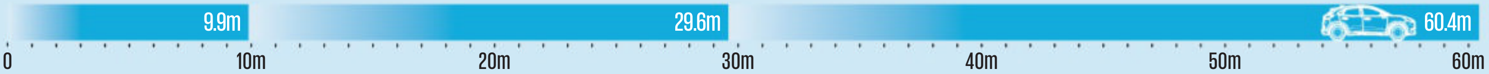


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.52sec

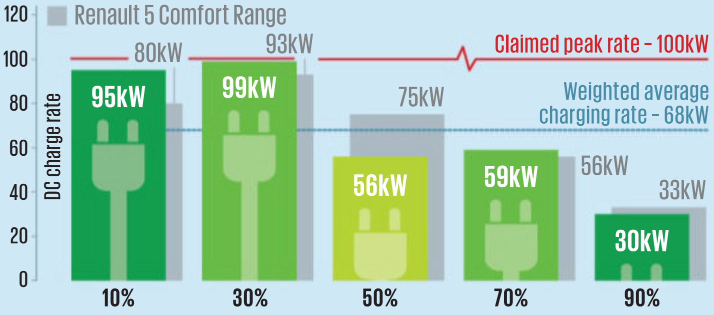


Wet 60-0mph 3.10sec



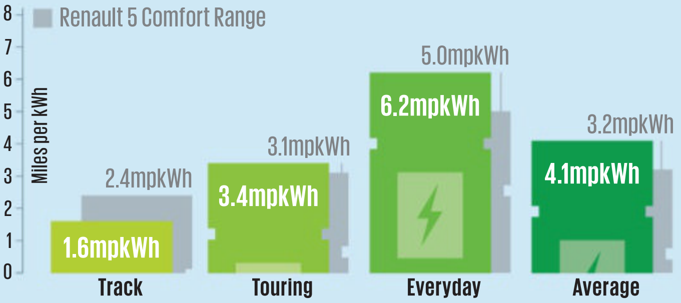
RAPID-CHARGING PERFORMANCE

Charging port location Nearside rear wing

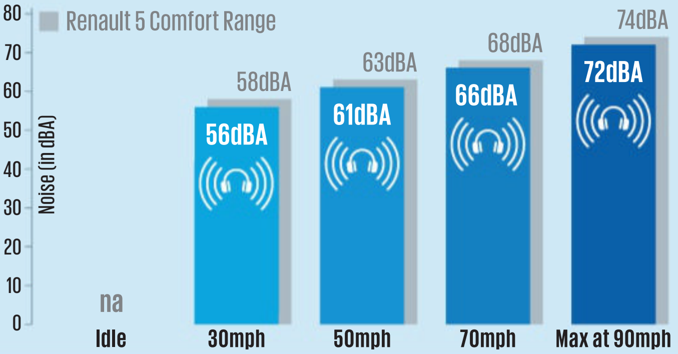


RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 234 miles, 4.7mpkWh (combined) **Test range** 179/148/270 miles (average/touring/everyday)

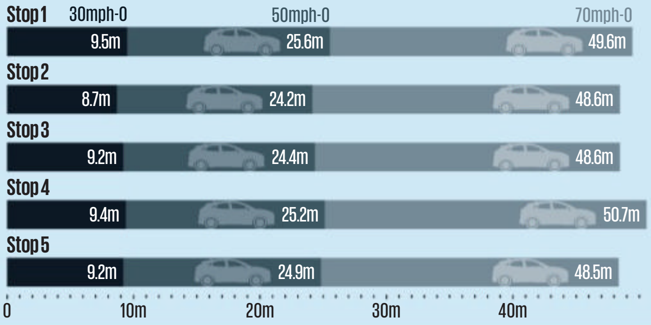


CABIN NOISE



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: -1.1m



PETER LIDDIARD

THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

VERDICT

Ford finally brings engagement to the small EV class

★★★★☆

Being based on the existing petrol Puma platform, the Gen-E's potential to change the game in its class was always going to be limited. Certainly, Ford's belated introduction of a more affordable EV doesn't set new benchmarks for range, charging speed or price, even if the car's 'everyday' efficiency is very good indeed.

Instead, this is a nicely rounded small electric crossover and, unlike the VW-based Explorer, it is recognisably 'Ford' in its handling. Owners will enjoy driving it, even if they can't quite say why. Its easygoing manner extends to its refinement, which is a surprising strength, to go along with that everyday economy and a vast boot.

The Gen-E straddles the outright-budget EV class and the more refined small SUV class and does so neatly.

TESTERS' NOTES

RICHARD LANE
There's obviously hot hatch potential here, if Ford were to apply the ST badge. Abarth has recently transformed the Fiat 600e in a flawed but fun way and Ford could do the same here, minus the brutal ride quality. Could be fun.

MATT SAUNDERS
It almost beggars belief that Ford has taken so long to bring this car to market, especially given that the platform isn't an all-new proposition but an adaptation of hardware that has been in service for many, many years. I'm glad it's now here, though, and it's good.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Increase the amount of usable battery capacity.
- Find a solution for the shortage of rear foot space.
- Get an Alpine A290 rival in the works ASAP.

RANKING RIVALS

	1	2	3	4	5	6
				FORD PUMA GEN-E		
	RENAULT 5 COMFORT RANGE ICONIC FIVE High-spec 5 is stylish both inside and out and undercuts the basic Gen-E. Quietly good to drive too.	**SKODA ELROQ 50 SE** Not as enjoyable to drive as the Gen-E but better in nearly every other respect, with only a modest premium to pay for it.	**KIA EV3 AIR** It can just about be considered a direct rival for the Gen-E, which it beats for pace, practicality and outright range.		**VOLVO EX30 CORE** Rear-drive Volvo is impressively quick at this price but suffers from a poor cockpit concept and an unsettled ride.	**JEEP AVENGER ELECTRIC LONGITUDE** Has genuine personality and an easy drivability but limited EV capability.
	★★★★⯪	★★★★⯪	★★★★☆		★★★☆☆	★★★☆☆
Price	£28,995	£31,510	£33,005		£33,060	£29,999
Power, torque	148bhp, 181lb ft	168bhp, 229lb ft	201bhp, 209lb ft		268bhp, 253lb ft	154bhp, 192lb ft
0-62mph, top speed	7.9sec, 94mph	8.7sec, 99mph	7.5sec, 105mph		5.7sec, 112mph	9.0sec, 93mph
Range, economy	248 miles, 4.2mpkWh	232 miles, 3.9mpkWh	270 miles, 4.1mpkWh		209 miles, 3.6mpkWh	249 miles, 3.9mpkWh

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

FORD PUMA GEN-E SELECT

On-the-road price £29,995
Price as tested £31,795
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £14,025
Typical PCP £419 pcm (£5235 deposit + 36 months/27,000 miles)
Insurance group 18E

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard 17in alloy wheels, LED headlights with auto high beam, powered door mirrors, 12.8in digital instrument cluster, 12in touchscreen with wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, wireless charging pad, rear-view camera and parking sensors, cruise control, heated windscreen
Optional Winter Pack (including heated front seats and heated steering wheel) £350, Comfort Pack (including powered tailgate, keyless entry and heated wing mirrors with puddle lamps) £650, Solar Silver paint £800
Also available Retractable panoramic roof £1100, Advanced Driver Assistance Pack £950

MOTOR & BATTERY

Installation Front, transverse, FWD
Type Permanent magnet synchronous motor
Power 166bhp
Torque 214lb ft
Battery type NMC
Capacity 53.0/43.6kWh (total/usable)
Voltage 400V
Power to weight 112bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 144lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 1-spd reduction gear

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel monocoque
Weight/as tested 1488kg/na
Drag coefficient 0.29
Wheels 7.0Jx17in
Tyres 215/55 R17 98W, Goodyear EfficientGrip Performance 2
Spare None (tyre inflation kit)

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Rear Torsion bar, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Steering EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.7 turns lock to lock; 10.5m turning circle

BRAKES

Front 278mm ventilated discs, sliding caliper **Rear** 228mm drums **Handbrake type** Electronic, automatic

SAFETY

Euro NCAP rating 4 stars (2022) Adult occupant 75%, child occupant 84%, vulnerable road users 70%, safety assist 69%

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5753**

KGM TORRES

Korea's off-roader specialist enters a new era with a fresh brand identity

Japan's keiretsu – those widely diversified industrial conglomerates like Mitsubishi and Sumitomo – are globally renowned. And South Korea has similar ones, called chaebol.

In 2022, one such chaebol, the KG Group (which makes products as different as steel, fertiliser, renewable energy and, until fairly recently, fried chicken) bought ailing native specialist car maker Ssangyong out of receivership. The group's new automotive arm – KG Mobility, or KGM for short – promptly sprang into being, the Ssangyong brand was dropped and the subject of this road test, the KGM Torres, became one of the first all-new cars to emerge under the grand new auspices.

This will remain a specialist SUV brand, the new management says, with a focus on tough, rugged, versatile family cars – although those cars will move over time towards wider integration of electric and electrified powertrains and more advanced technology besides. Now to find out how that all starts.

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★☆☆

PROS Looks tough; isn't heavy; respectable capability credentials

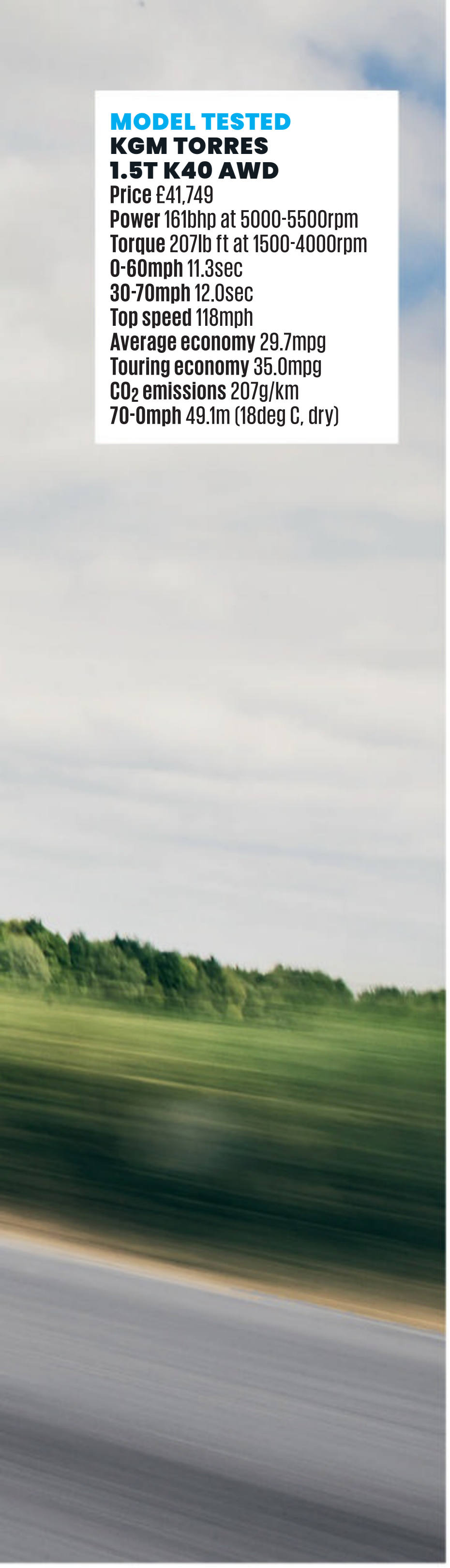
CONS Petrol engine looks rather limp on paper; most versions, EV included, lack four-wheel drive

The Torres sits in between KGM's Nissan Qashqai-sized Korando and the seven-seat, ladder-on-frame Rexton SUV. At a little over 4.7m long, it's proportioned like the Honda CR-V, with an even boxier silhouette, and there's a surprising amount of visual character to its design that's quite easy to warm to.

It's built on a steel monocoque chassis designed to accommodate both combustion engines and electric drive. The regular Torres is powered by the same transverse-mounted, 1.5-litre turbocharged four-cylinder petrol engine found in the smaller Korando and Tivoli.

That engine makes 161bhp and 207lb ft, which can meet either the front wheels or, as tested, all four via a six-speed Aisin automatic gearbox. It's not a great deal of motivating power for a car this size, especially when it's the only combustion engine available; some rivals comfortably exceed 200bhp. The all-electric version, the Torres EVX, goes some way to addressing that, offering 204bhp, but it has only a front-drive, single-motor layout.

KGM provides the Torres with some off-road readiness, though. The car has SUV-specific Hankook all-season tyres and all-independent coil-spring suspension with sufficiently long travel to enable approach and departure angles of around 20deg and 195mm of ground clearance. That's better than the mid-sized SUV class

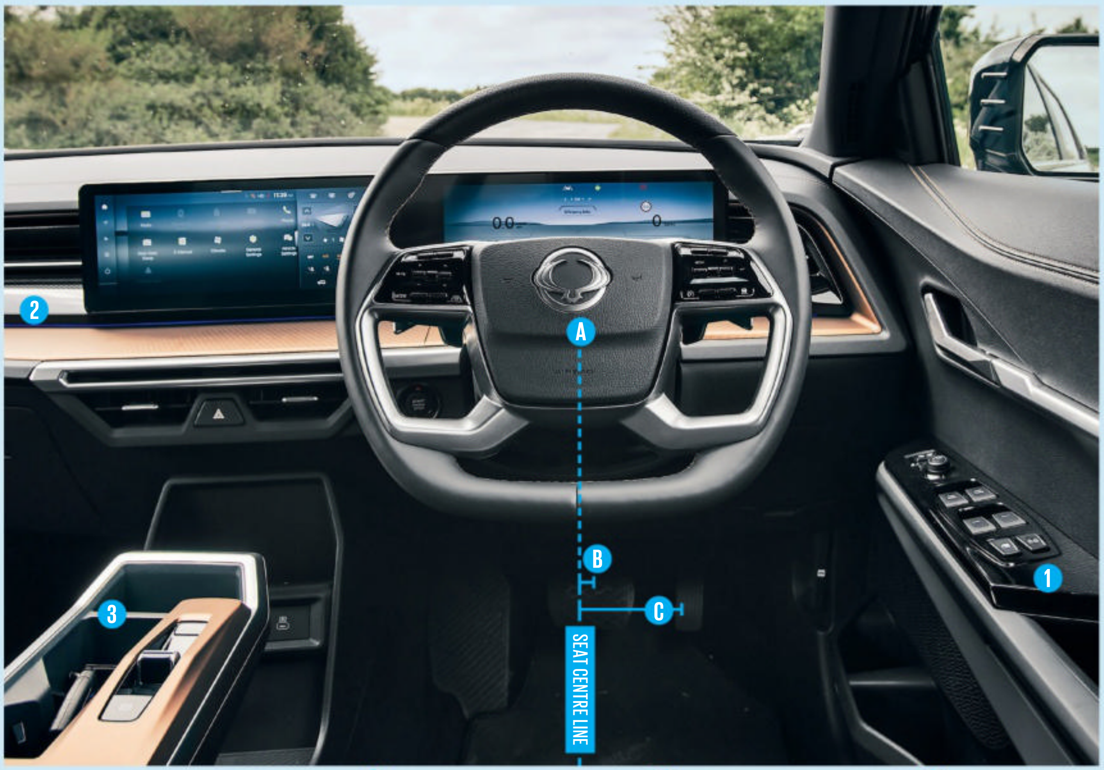


MODEL TESTED
KGM TORRES
1.5T K40 AWD
Price £41,749
Power 161bhp at 5000-5500rpm
Torque 207lb ft at 1500-4000rpm
0-60mph 11.3sec
30-70mph 12.0sec
Top speed 118mph
Average economy 29.7mpg
Touring economy 35.0mpg
CO_2 emissions 207g/km
70-0mph 49.1m (18deg C, dry)

① KGM's take on 'piano black' gloss plastic trim on the door panels looks particularly cheap and gathers dust and smudgy fingerprints really quickly.

② Silver trim across the doors and dash has a blue ambient lighting inlay that appears after dark. In daylight, it doesn't look or feel especially appealing, though.

③ Between the door pockets, upper and lower centre console and centre stack, there's loads of useful cabin storage. Heated rear seats are a perk of K40 trim too.



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 10mm right Ⓑ Brake offset 10mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 150mm right. Wheel and pedals are well placed. Driving position is fairly perched but comfortable.

norm, although only marginally so.

Meanwhile, the car is rated to tow 1500kg on a braked trailer – another area where it probably should do more as an extra-capable choice.

INTERIOR

★★★☆☆

PROS Decent cabin space; big boot; contemporary style; digital tech
CONS Short of some physical switchgear; mediocre tactile quality

The side-by-side arrangement of the flatscreen instrumentation and infotainment screens, and the selection of physical controls on the steering wheel spokes, give you a strong clue to the Torres's country of origin. There's certainly more than a passing similarity with the design philosophies of Hyundai and Kia here, if not the same tactile quality.

The driving position is of about typical height for a mid-sized SUV and there's a two-tier centre console with plenty of storage space and a downsized drive selector rocker.

The steering wheel spokes give you some physical controls for key ADAS (adaptive cruise control, active lane keeping) and audio functions but still not enough of the former in particular. To disable the speed limit reminder and driver monitoring buzzers, for example, it's a several-tier dive into the touchscreen, which isn't especially responsive or well laid out.

Rear space is fairly class typical: meaner than some for leg room but more generous for head room. Visibility from the driver's seat is commendable, past fairly skinny A- and B-pillars and over straight-sided body proportions.

KGM advertises 703 litres of available boot space and our test car mostly backed that up, proving well able to swallow bulky loads. We measured seats-up loading length at 980mm and width at a minimum 1050mm between the rear wheel arches. Both figures beat the VW Tiguan by a significant distance.

MULTIMEDIA

★★⯪☆☆

PROS Digital instruments can be configured and are easy to read
CONS Usability is average at best; smartphone mirroring is wired only; TomTom navigation is slow

The standard infotainment system is predominantly operated via a 12.3in touchscreen. That it takes a notable amount of time to boot on start up is your first clue that its responsiveness isn't going to be stellar. Its main navigation list menu structure is displayed on the left of the screen, making it harder to reach in a right-hand-drive car.

A swipe-out menu for air-con controls can be accessed from the right-hand margin of the screen; another, with selectable shortcuts including drive mode options, from the upper margin. But neither tends to appear at the first time of swiping or makes little adjustments as easy as they could be.

KGM offers TomTom navigation and a wireless phone-charging pad on upper-level K40 cars, but neither is worth the upgrade. The sat-nav is slow to load and a little obstinate to program and the pad is mostly pointless, since wired-only smartphone mirroring means you're likely to plug in anyway.

PERFORMANCE

★★★☆☆

PROS Enough torque for most demands; fairly quiet at a cruise
CONS Engine is strained and weak at high revs; gearbox lacks a 'locked in' manual mode; outright ▸

■ There's a fake bulge for a spare wheel, but only the AWD version gets one, and a handle that makes this look like a side-hinged 'tailgate' when it isn't. That's the Torres in microcosm.

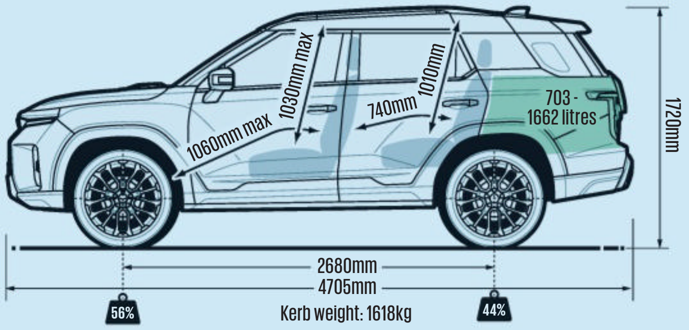
■ Chunky grille and angular headlights lend plenty of toughness up front. The daytime-running lights are supposed to look like the constellation Ursa Major.

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

TEST RESULTS

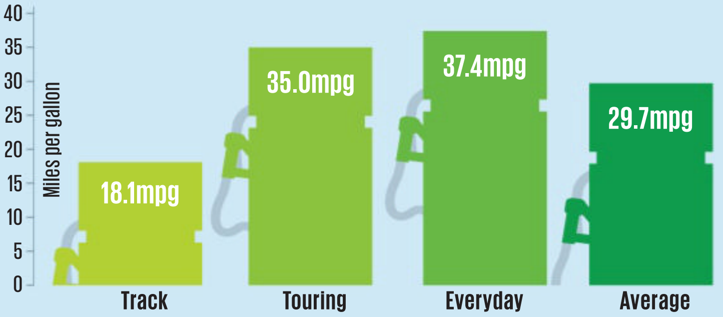
DIMENSIONS

Length 4705mm **Width** 2070/1890mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1720mm **Door span** 3690mm **Max height to open bootlid** 2060mm



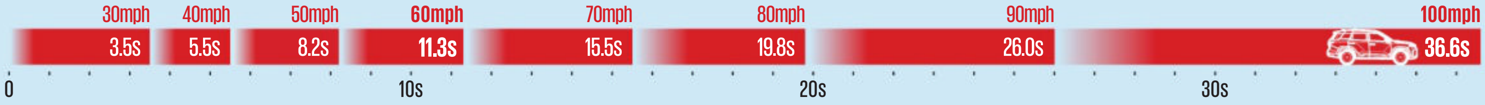
RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 26.5mpg (combined) **Test range** 307/362/387 miles (average/touring/everyday)



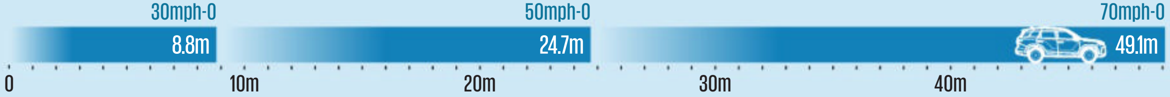
ACCELERATION

Test conditions 18deg C, dry
Standing quarter mile 18.2sec at 77.2mph **Standing km** 33.2sec at 97.4mph **30-70mph** 12.0sec **50-80mph** 11.6sec **0-62mph** 11.9sec

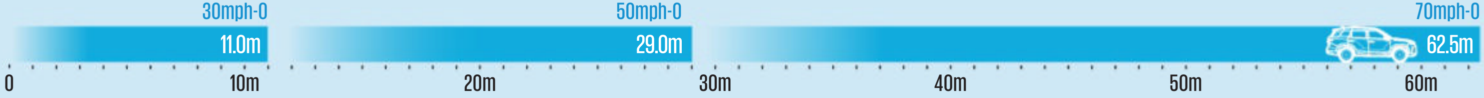


BRAKING

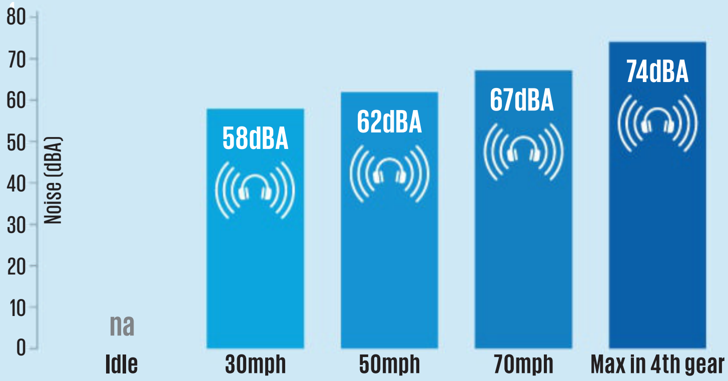
Dry 60-0mph 2.69sec



Wet 60-0mph 3.24sec



CABIN NOISE



MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

KGM TORRES 1.5T K40 AWD

On-the-road price £41,749
Price as tested £43,378
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £17,550
Insurance group 29

ENGINE

Installation Front, transverse, 4WD
Type 4 cyls in line, 1497cc, turbocharged, petrol
Power 161bhp at 5000-5500rpm
Torque 207lb ft at 1500-4000rpm
Redline 5300rpm
Specific output 108bhp per litre
Power to weight 100bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 128lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 6-spd automatic **rpm in top gear at 70/80mph** 2242/2562

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Steel monocoque
Weight/as tested 1618kg/1661kg
Wheels 8.0Jx20in **Tyres** 245/45 R20 99V, Hankook Ventus S2 ASX
Fuel tank 47 litres

SUSPENSION & STEERING

Front MacPherson struts, coil springs, anti-roll bar **Rear** Multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Steering EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.5 turns lock to lock; 10.8m turning circle **Brakes** 298mm ventilated discs, two-piston calipers (f), 284mm solid discs, floating calipers (r)

> **"It rides and handles like a bigger car than it actually is"**

PETER LIDDIARD

THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

◂ performance deteriorates with intensive use

We identified this 1.5-litre turbocharged petrol powertrain as a potential vulnerability earlier on. So it proves, but it is less about how much accessible performance it produces and more about the robustness of that power.

Acceleration runs for the Autocar road test are measured as two-way averages, usually to correct for wind resistance. In the Torres, however, we noted considerably poorer performance on the second legs of our runs, which the car evidenced on two occasions and in different places. At its quickest, the car managed 0-60mph in a whisker under 10sec, but on its second run, that slowed to 12.7sec, and it was slower again on its third. This is much more likely to be the outcome of software calibration intended to protect the powertrain hardware than any adverse effects of heat or load on that hardware. But it's not something that most modern piston-engined cars demonstrate so readily and doesn't give you the utmost confidence for the broader capability of the car.

On the road, the Torres's performance typically reflects much better on it. It may not be quick against the clock but that 1.5-litre turbo petrol is quiet at a cruise and, mated to a six-speed gearbox with plenty of CVT-like slushy delivery, it creates at least respectable accessible torque on part throttle. It isn't keen on holding ratios at power, even in 'manual mode', or revving quickly, so we couldn't extract in-gear acceleration figures. But this is a powertrain you could live with – without feeling particularly good about.

RIDE & HANDLING

★★★☆☆

PROS Settled and wieldy enough
CONS More body movement than rivals; under-damped, crude edge to the ride; tyres not brilliant in wet

In many ways, the Torres reminds us of SUVs of 20 or 30 years ago. Compared with the average class rival, it feels softly sprung and slightly exaggerated and permissive in its body movements. Its on-road grip levels and chassis responses are gentler and slighter than the norm.

On balance, it probably rides and handles like a bigger car than it actually is, although never in such a pronounced fashion as to actually get in its own way too much.

It exhibits noticeable body roll when cornering but not enough at normal road speeds to undermine its steering authority or stability. There's a bit of heave and toss about the primary ride on country roads and an unchecked fidget about its secondary ride around town and over sharper inputs, neither of which makes it feel very attentively damped.

The car's Hankook all-season tyres grip dry asphalt respectably well but struggled somewhat on MIRA's special high-grip wet surfaces, where it recorded quite poor outright stopping distances.

Its traction and stability controls seem well tuned in road driving but its ADAS functions less so. The lane keeping system tends to grab at the wheel at lower speeds more than you expect; the adaptive cruise control is slow to respond to changes in the car's environment; and the driver monitoring and speed limit reminder systems are so frequent and unexplained with their beeps and bongs as to be seriously irksome.

OFF ROAD

★★★⯪☆

PROS Enough capability for loose surfaces and rutted tracks; slushy auto 'box makes the most of torque
CONS Lacks the grunt of a diesel; limited clearance and articulation

The Torres isn't the half-price Land Cruiser or Defender that its styling hints at, yet it still copes fairly well with medium-duty off-roading.

Its all-season tyres and four-wheel drive system generate fairly strong traction on gravel, so you needn't use the 'locked 4x4' mode until you hit wet grass or mud, when there's sufficient ground clearance and wheel articulation, and good enough accessible torque and low-speed drivability, to deal with medium-sized moguls, troughs and fairly steep muddy slopes easily.

BUYING & OWNING

★★☆☆☆

PROS Moderately cheap as a cash buy; plenty of standard equipment
CONS Poor residuals and high APR hurt finance deal; thirst for fuel

After the UK arrivals of brands like MG and Jaecoo, KGM has competition as a budget brand that Ssangyong never really contended with. But a starting price of £36,749 doesn't really let the Torres engage with those Chinese-made options. Neither does this car have the material quality you might expect to pay extra for.

At more than £43,000 after options and no doubt partly due to weak residual values, our range-topping AWD test car was actually £70 per month more expensive than a Toyota RAV4 PHEV on like-for-like finance terms.

Unlike with the RAV4, Torres owners shouldn't expect meaningful fuel economy savings. The car recorded a barely passable 35mpg on our touring test, was far less frugal around town and posted a conspicuously disappointing test average of just 29.7mpg. **A**

VERDICT

Cheerful enough but not as cheap or as capable as we had hoped

★★⯪☆☆

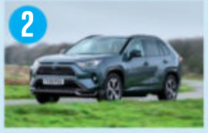
There's a cheery toughness about the KGM Torres that catches the eye. However, it isn't entirely the rough-and-tumble operator it initially appears – and nor is it a bargain by the standards of 2025.

It has the cargo space for bulky hauling and works moderately well off road, but its powertrain feels weedy at times and lacks efficiency; its cabin has some style and colour but little quality; its digital technology is short of intuitive usability; and its driver assistance systems irk and distract.

It's a car without a really convincing selling point, then, particularly so beyond the superficial.

RIVALS

SKODA KODIAQ 4X4
From £44,105
★★★★⯪



TOYOTA RAV4 PHEV AWD
From £44,230
★★★★☆

HYUNDAI TUCSON 4WD
From £40,665
★★★★☆

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defaqto
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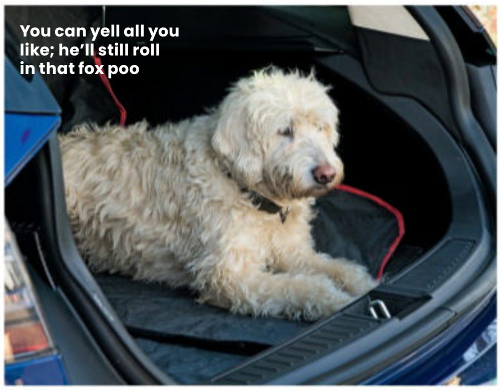
ILLYA VERPRAET

Testing, testing

Today's driver assistance systems aren't as clever as they think they are

Occasionally you see people giving their dog a stern talking to for tugging at the leash, barking at a goose or engaging in other dog-typical behaviour. Part of me wants to say "the dog doesn't understand!", but I don't, because that would be weird. Also I do understand the urge to chastise something for only doing what its innate but relatively simple evolutionary programming tells it to do – particularly given that many modern cars come with adaptive cruise control.

I often find myself shouting at a test car: "Just go 70mph, you bastard!" Who decided that adaptive cruise control is a superior version of normal cruise control, rendering the latter obsolete? Some cars still let you switch between the two, but adaptive is the default and only option with most these days.



You can yell all you like; he'll still roll in that fox poo

> **"It's stressful, unless you're happy to be a middle-lane zombie"**

Adaptive cruise control can be quite useful in dense traffic, when you've got no choice but to just stay in your lane and go with the flow. At almost any other time on the motorway, though, I find 'dumb' cruise control far more relaxing: Just set it to 70mph, and when the distance to the car in front becomes uncomfortable, indicate right and overtake.

If you want to do that and maintain good lane discipline with adaptive cruise control, you need to guess when the car ahead is going to start to slow and either override it with the accelerator or move to the right lane sooner than would be ideal. That's not to mention the stress caused by the sensors seeing ghosts and applying the brakes for no reason or deciding to slow down because there's a slight curve in the road.

Unless you're happy to be a cruise control zombie mindlessly sitting in the middle lane at 65mph with another car glued to your rear bumper, adaptive cruise control actually requires more brainpower, effort and general babysitting from the driver. I've spoken to several colleagues who feel the same way about cruise control – but maybe we're in a control-freak motoring journalist bubble.

Sure, you could just not bother and use the good old accelerator pedal to manage your speed, but in a lot of cars that's surprisingly hard, because turbo lag, hybrid systems and a 'sporty' throttle map can conspire to make maintaining a constant speed quite difficult. Anyway, is it too much to ask that convenience features are actually, I don't know, convenient?

The broader issue here is 'smart' technology trying to make things easier by automating them but not actually being quite smart enough to do it well. It's not just cruise control; some BMWs and Toyotas have automatic heated and cooled seats. The idea is that you never have to press a button again (luxury! Also, no more need to make a button, so profit!), because just at the point where you're starting to feel cold, the seat starts to warm up. My experience of these features is actually being confused by why the heated seats have randomly stopped working.

Then there are Volvos that gaslight their drivers with a 'contextual' shortcut bar, which shows you the buttons the car thinks you might find useful at any given moment: "I must be going insane: I swear there was a shortcut for opening the glovebox last time I looked."

Like a dog that can identify and retrieve a specific stick that its owner has thrown into the bushes, the intelligence of these systems can seem quite impressive in a certain light – but you wouldn't trust them to drive a car.

Unlike dogs, cars have settings menus, so you should be able to turn them on and off as you please. Bafflingly, though, you often can't. For now, shouting will have to suffice. Maybe at some point, the voice control will get the message.

Last dance with

Lusty premium turbo diesels were once the order of the day, but now they're a dying breed. **STEPHEN DOBIE** scours the new-car listings to sample three rare survivors

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

KR74 CVZ
KN74 VWP

the derv-il

May 2025 marks a slightly unorthodox anniversary: that of a 20-year-old Jenson Button being caught speeding on his way to Monaco, clocking more than 140mph on a French motorway in a BMW 330d. 'Prodigy racer enjoys speed' would normally rank no higher than 'dog bites man' as headline fodder, but the fact he invoked the blues and twos of the gendarmerie in a *diesel* was too much for the papers to resist back in 2000.

The car was owned by Williams-BMW, and it's easy to imagine them gleefully reimbursing his £500 fine for the publicity garnered. The market for premium diesel cars swelled from there, primarily due to engineering nous within the industry. But there's clearly something delicious about the possible butterfly effect of a future Formula 1 world champion getting excitable in an oil-burner on an empty autoroute.

By the end of the 2000s, diesel had become the de facto choice for most premium car buyers. Its might was proved annually in endurance racing, with Audi's trophy cabinet needing reinforcement after relentless TDI victories around Le Mans. Across the decade the brand's road-going diesel range spanned from lowly three-pots to V12s, yet the firm now offers little beyond four-cylinder TDIs in its medium cars and a V6 for the brave souls spending big cash on an A8, Q7 or Q8. It's almost as if the wider Volkswagen Group has something of a chequered history with diesel power…

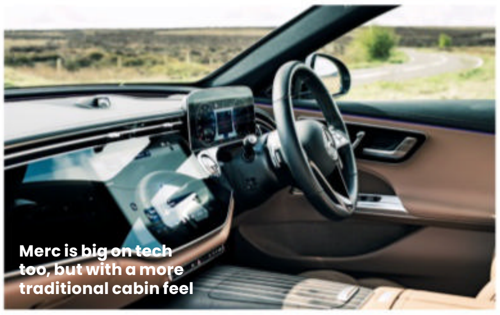
For all the inexorable rise of diesel before its eponymous scandal, its dwindling appeal since 2015 has felt like more of a slow decline. Hybrid and electric cars have gradually welcomed the fuel's former customers, while pure petrol power has amped up its efficiency credentials. Drawing together three diesel heroes for this test – cars with a sizeable engine intrinsic to their ultimate appeal – uncovered vanishingly few candidates, and nowt with more than six cylinders.

BMW appears to be phasing diesel out entirely, in fact, with only its SUVs possessing diesel power on UK price lists. Your best bet of buying a sexier, sportier Bavarian car is a Buchloe-built Alpina – but even then, you can only order until summer. Alpina is soon to be swallowed up by the BMW mothership, and talk of Maybach rivalry suggests rep-friendly cars like the D4 S

> ***"Pull the paddle shifters in Dynamic mode and the Range Rover Sport gleefully butts up against the limiter"***

Alpina massages an extra layer of luxury into the BMW base car's interior

Screen-heavy Sport interior will perhaps age the quickest of the three



Merc is big on tech too, but with a more traditional cabin feel

Range Rover Sport's dynamic ability belies its mass; the Merc is agile and responsive

Gran Coupé we have here won't live on. It kicks off this group in terms of both size and price, although each of our trio possesses a straight-six, twin-turbo engine with a minor degree of electrified assistance. All send roughly 350bhp through an automatic 'box and all four wheels for a 0-62mph time in the region of five seconds. Only their inevitable span of weight – and the Alpina's convention-busting 168mph top speed – truly separates them in an on-paper comparison.

It's the Alpina I hop in first, its exterior exuding glamour, its interior rich in luxury and its rarity tangible beside the more familiar shapes in our rural Derbyshire lay-by. The delicious past form of its maker is a not inconsiderable aside.

With little surprise the D4 S is an immediately lovely device and a really simple thing to get in and drive quickly and with confidence. Like all the best magic tricks, an Alpina's plush sleight of hand over torrid surfaces is a continual novelty. It doesn't lack the core handing appeal of its base BMW, but there's a cushioned layer here that requires the sunroof lip open – and Peak District birdsong flowing in – for me to remember the outside world exists at all.

Most Alpina buyers make the price and power jump up to a petrol B3 or B4, but those who go diesel are unearthing a hidden gem. Its B57 six has been in service since 2015, having had its debut in a BMW 7 Series and since been produced in single-, twin- and almighty quad-turbo variants while also finding a home in the Ineos Grenadier. Here it has enjoyed a welcome Alpina tickle to produce a mite more power than its BMW M440d base (which is no longer offered).

Its chassis doesn't immediately corral you to pull the lowest gear, find the highest revs and start seeking the limits of its adhesion. I have no doubt the car will be capable if you chase such highs, but the smoothness of its delivery and shortness of its rev range inspire a calmer approach. Its lovely embossed, extended shift paddles feel great, mind, and relishing the valedictory feel of this whole affair, I'm compelled to pull them even though the engine punches just as willingly and likely sips less fuel making its own decisions. An extended pull of the left paddle drops you to the lowest possible gear – a detail that always exposes a development team that relishes the act of driving.

Higher revs induce more of the Alpina's synthesised soundtrack, yet it's the low-down, bassy diesel rumble that my ears enjoy most, and there's certainly enough torque to shorten shifts if you wish. Either way, this is a car that punches hard and in which you can build almighty pace with ever-faithful traction below you. "It's fast and frugal, effortless and opulent, enticing to travel in and engaging to drive," summarised Matt Saunders when he first reviewed this car. In short, it does everything. But not for much longer: production ends in December, meaning the order books close by July. Get in quick.

Climbing into the Range Rover Sport from the Alpina is only ever going to make the Firenze Red SUV feel its mass. The Sport is a sizeable car by any gauge and soars into six-figure pricing with little fuss. You can get a straight-six diesel hit for £76,000 if you're happy with a 247bhp D250, but we've gone for the most potent D350. This is a celebration, after all.

With no knowledge of a larger Range Rover you might fairly assume this was the real thing; it lifts its occupants far from the road both literally and metaphorically. Its Ingenium twin-turbocharged six is a good power source, if far from bewitching. Crucially, though, it feels a world away from relying on a strained four-cylinder latched to an e-motor, and while its power-to-weight ratio is comfortably the worst in this company, its ample performance makes for easily won progress. It's not the silent type at revs, although the almost eight-cylinder soundtrack of its augmentation feels welcome when you're in a suitably boisterous mood. Pull the paddle shifters in Dynamic mode and it gleefully butts up against the rev limiter, while the ability to loosen the reins on its stability control remains a privilege many of its SUV contemporaries have ceased to offer. ▸

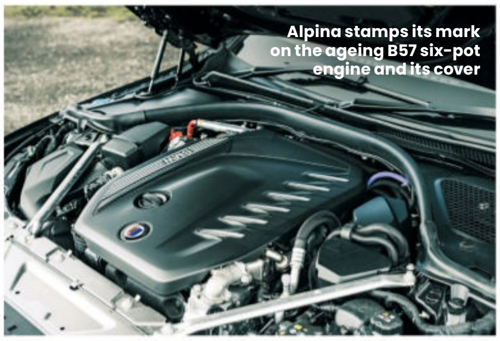
D4 S's disconcertingly supple ride isn't at the expense of engagement

Alpina is a five-door pretending to be a coupé; Merc is an honest estate

The Sport can't disguise its width when pressing on along narrow roads

Range Rover Sport's twin-turbo in-line six gets vocal when stretched

Merc's 3.0-litre six is the most potent here, with 362bhp and 553lb ft


Alpina stamps its mark on the ageing B57 six-pot engine and its cover

The ingredients are there for an involving drive, then, but the Sport feels unwaveringly large on roads such as this. It's an additional bind when its drive modes are toggled through the touchscreen. Indeed, everything is tucked within its curved display. You'll frequently nudge catseyes on thickly hedged lanes, so the last thing you need is a reason to glance away from the road ahead. I was half-expecting the Sport to be a bit of a paragon of sense, given older Range Rovers famously hosted big buttons receptive to farming gloves. But no more. The most likely result is you'll leave it in its default Comfort settings and bathe in the way it so insouciantly isolates you from your surroundings. At which point its charm is much more evident.

"Careful tuning of steering and supple but surprisingly sophisticated damping are the car's calling cards," we said in the Sport's full road test. And while those words still ring true, the car's colossal weight and width stymie its driver appeal on B- rather than A-roads. It never quite draws you in or inspires you to get more intimate with what it can do, which, knowing the breadth of its maker's ride and handling development, means missing out on some true expertise.

Moreover, I'm craving the older-school V8 diesels of Range Rovers past, whose extra muscle and timbre might just tease some life from this clearly capable chassis. It's a £16k jump from this D350 to a V8 petrol P350, and when an SV paint finish can swallow half that deficit anyway, it's easy to see why one might indulge – although 44% of Range Rover Sport buyers still favour diesel against just 7% choosing pure petrol. JLR hasn't explicitly committed to a diesel future, saying only: "The flexibility of our world-leading powertrain technologies means we can continue to offer hybrid and ICE vehicles in our ranges as we begin to roll out full EV options."

Mercedes-Benz is similarly ambiguous, saying it plans to "cater to different customer needs, whether it's an all-electric drivetrain or an electrified combustion engine, until well into the 2030s". In the here and now, its E450d Estate envelopes you like a hunkered-down C-Class after experiencing the chunky Sport. But there's no mistaking its brand positioning once ensconced inside, surrounded by the vast panoramic display of its three screens. It's not lacking tech, yet it doesn't feel overly burdened by it once you've sussed its 'Hey Mercedes' functionality. Its speed limit bongs rank among the simplest to turn off anywhere.

I don't remember any stock E-Class driving this well, and it feels far and away the briskest car in our group. Its superior torque figure is delivered from a mite over 1000rpm to swiftly cancel out its extra flab over the Alpina. The Mercedes pairs our trio's quietest engine with the smoothest gearbox, one that allows you to flick the dinky metal paddles to change ratios yourself but which feels happiest when left alone. Its choices are smart ones even when you're making strong progress – which is something this car certainly inspires.

The E450d rides impeccably whichever mode its air suspension is in, while quick-witted but suave steering tucks the mass accurately into corners. Get back on the power and the rear axle assertively does the pushing on the way out of turns, its four-wheel drive system clearly open-minded about cornering attitude. You're soon carrying more speed than its demure outward appearance sets the stall for. On gnarly British roads like these, plenty of us would get most of the satisfaction we need from this car.

The groundswell of torque from its OM656 diesel engine – around in base form since 2017 and shared in this more powerful tune

KR74 CVZ
FJ25 ZPC

"The E450d rides impeccably whichever mode it is in"

	ALPINA D4 S GRAN COUPÉ	MERCEDES-BENZ E450D ESTATE	RANGE ROVER SPORT D350 AUTOBIOGRAPHY
Rating	★★★★⯪	★★★★⯪	★★★★☆
Price	£67,000	£81,530	£104,275
Price as tested	£79,485	£89,640	£122,070
Engine	6 cyls in line, 2993cc, twin-turbo, diesel	6 cyls in line, 2989cc, twin-turbo, diesel	6 cyls in line, 2997cc, twin-turbo, diesel
Power	350bhp at 4000-4200rpm	362bhp at 4000rpm	345bhp at 4000rpm
Torque	538lb ft at 1750-2750rpm	553lb ft at 1350-2800rpm	516lb ft at 1500-3000rpm
Gearbox	8-spd automatic, 4WD	9-spd automatic, 4WD	8-spd automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight	1945kg	2065kg	2360kg
0-62mph	4.8sec	5.0sec	5.5sec
Top speed	168mph	155mph	145mph
Economy	40.9mpg	43.5mpg	37.0mpg
CO_2, tax band	182g/km, 37%	171g/km, 37%	200g/km, 37%

with the S-Class – is likely a big factor. It's not an immediately enthralling engine, but it legitimises Merc's move away from V6 diesels in the mid-2010s by not sacrificing their class. It doesn't bother with the overt sound synthesis of today's foes, and while it's not trying to be a performance car, it ends up being an utterly beguiling low-key driver's device.

All the while, perfume pumps through the air vents amid an enchanting mix of tan leather and pinstriped wood, all your major touch points flourished with knurled metal edges. This E-Class is a car of bafflingly few compromises, one whose modus operandi feels thoroughly boosted by the large lungs and long stride of its diesel power. "It is entirely possible that once the current era of premium estate cars is put out to pasture, diesel power will be retired with them," reported our road test earlier this year. "If that is the case, the Mercedes E450d will stand as an exemplar of what made these cars such capable, effortless, characterful companions."

Declaring a winner from this oddball group is hardly conclusive, but against all most rational criteria the E450d walks such a comparison. Rationality used to be the diesel byword, of course, but times have changed. If this truly is a last dance with the devil, the big Benz isn't the most covetable car here. That accolade belongs to a car whose days look numbered in numerous ways. It's the Alpina D4 S that I suggest you leap in and head for the continent. Just don't follow young Jenson's lead too closely… **A**

USED PREMIUM DIESEL HEROES

AUDI Q7 V12 TDI
Audi proved its turbo diesel tech at the gruelling 24 Hours of Le Mans, first winning with a V12 TDI in 2006. Mere mortals got to revel in its success with a 493bhp 6.0-litre Q7, launched in 2009 at a smidge under £100k. Around 30 still loiter in the UK, and with so few to choose from, there are no bargains. Prices start at £30k whatever the mileage.

VW PHAETON V10 TDI
As rare as the Q7 V12 is, Volkswagen's uber-limo with a 5.0-litre V10 diesel up front. Ferdinand Piëch's brainchild guzzles fuel at 25mpg (his true diesel masterpiece, the VW XL1, manages 313mpg) and the maintenance bills will be similarly lofty. V10s sneak under £10,000 should you find one; a 3.0 V6 TDI consolation prize is available for less than £5k.

BMW X5 M50D
What does a BMW SUV have in common with a Bugatti EB110, Veyron or Chiron? Four turbochargers – so long as it's post-2018 and wears an M50d badge. A quad-turbo variant of the B57 six-pot in the Alpina D4 S, it produces 394bhp and 561lb ft and fires 2.3 tonnes to 62mph in around 5.0sec. Priced from £30k, it will be thirsty and hard on tyres. Just like a Bugatti, then.

BENTLEY BENTAYGA V8 D
The diesel Bentayga was perhaps inevitable given market trends and its underlying Audi DNA. The model adopted the same 4.0 V8 as the SQ7 and claimed five stars in Autocar, "rising head and shoulders above others as the consummate, complete, luxury SUV". Lots of 'em around, but owners love them so values are firmly north of £50k.

AUDI R18 TDI ULTRA
The R10, R15 and R18 TDI racers achieved eight Audi diesel victories in nine years, before Dieselgate led the brand to pull out of endurance racing in 2016. Several works cars exist in private collections and occasionally pop up for sale, perfect for a spot of historic racing. Prices are well into seven figures even before you've budgeted for a race crew.

A 11 (ANGERS)
LE MANS
ARNAGE
Z.I. SUD
KM74 MVN

Going public

Peugeot’s WEC ace Paul di Resta has only ever driven Le Mans’ Circuit de la Sarthe under race conditions – until now. **JAMES ATTWOOD** buckles up

A 28 (A 11)
CHARTRES
ALENÇON
LAVAL
ORLÉANS
CHANGÉ
Stade M. Marvingt

The Mulsanne straight is an almost unrecognisable public road most of the time

Having contested the 24 Hours of Le Mans five times, Paul di Resta has completed numerous laps of the Circuit de la Sarthe – but none quite like this. That's apparent when he steers his Peugeot onto the 8.47-mile track's long Mulsanne Straight and is confronted by an intimidating line of traffic.

Not the sort of traffic di Resta is used to encountering in his 9X8 hypercar, though: instead of rumbling GT3 cars and privateer LMP2 racers, there are numerous SUVs and hatchbacks, a succession of vans and even a bloke on an e-scooter. Add in the fact di Resta is behind the wheel of a Peugeot e-3008 and it's apparent this will be, by some margin, the slowest lap of Le Mans he has ever undertaken.

Much of the Circuit de la Sarthe still consists of public roads, so for most of the year the Mulsanne Straight serves as route départmentale D338, while Indianapolis and Arnage corners are merely curves on the D140 and D139.

All of that means anyone can experience driving key parts of the circuit. But what is it like to race on these roads? To find out, we've roped in the Peugeot driver and former Formula 1 racer as a guide. The e-3008 isn't quite as exciting a form of transport as the 9X8 would have been, but it's perfectly amiable for this purpose. Plus it's road-legal and has more than one seat.

Our lap doesn't start on the circuit's main straight, since that's part of the permanent Bugatti track. Instead we begin on the Boulevard des Italiens, which runs behind the huge main grandstands, and di Resta barely recognises the place. "I'm normally only here during race week, when it's really hard to move for people," he says. "It can take 30 minutes to get from here into the track."

Normally di Resta would blast up through a rise, under the Dunlop Bridge and into the snaking Dunlop Curves. Instead, we merely glimpse the top of the bridge as we duck under the D323 bypass and take a detour along the edge of an industrial estate, before joining the track just after the fearsome double-apex Tertre Rouge right-hander. Still, we're on the circuit proper for the start of the long Mulsanne straight, and di Resta highlights a good exit here as being the key to a fast lap time.

The Mulsanne was originally an uninterrupted 3.7 miles long, but there are now two chicanes to keep speeds in check. The D338 as it is today has speed limits and a couple of roundabouts to keep our pace in check, so the chicanes are fenced off at the side of the road. We pull over for an up-close look: the kerbs are more jagged than they appear from a distance, and di Resta explains that in a race he tends to keep away from them.

"You carry speed into here so you don't want to unsettle the car by running over the kerbs on the entry," he says. "You brake before the second part of the chicane, so you scrub speed and can attack those kerbs a bit more." But he notes an endurance race is about margin: you can't make up much time by attacking kerbs, but you can easily damage a car if you attack them too hard.

Through the chicane, it's back up to full speed. While the Mulsanne is unusually wide for a two-lane road thanks to two large shoulders, it's hard not to contemplate how narrow it must seem at 200mph. Even in an e-3008 di Resta is learning: at one stage he pulls across onto the hard shoulder, eager to get a sense of any changes in the road surface. "I've seen cars out here in the race, but I tend to steer clear," he says.

Even with the chicanes, drivers spend plenty of time at maximum speed. "You have more time to calculate yourself here than at other circuits," he says. "You're just sitting on the straight thinking 'I'm not doing very much' – but obviously these cars are going quite quickly."

The challenge increases when the sun sets: for much of the lap the only illumination is from headlights. The 39-year-old notes an increasing number of young drivers are breaking into endurance racing, and he admits he wouldn't have liked racing here in the dark as a teen.

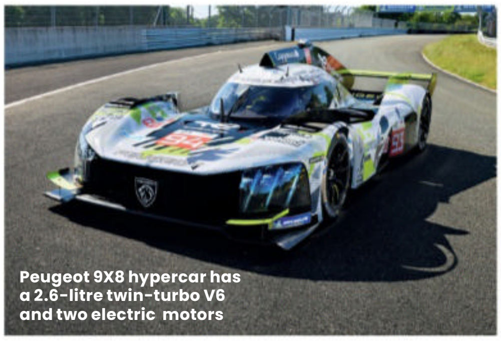
"When I go out at night now, I don't even think about it," he says. "But the first time you think: 'Am I prepared for this?' To think there are 18-year-old kids out there now… I was in my early 30s when I first did it, and it was daunting."

Di Resta's path here included winning the DTM touring car title, three years of racing in Formula 1 for Force India and stints as a Mercedes F1 reserve and a Sky F1 TV pundit. "When I was growing up, I was focused on single-seaters, and Le Mans wasn't really something I wanted to do," he admits. "I didn't want to share a car with someone."

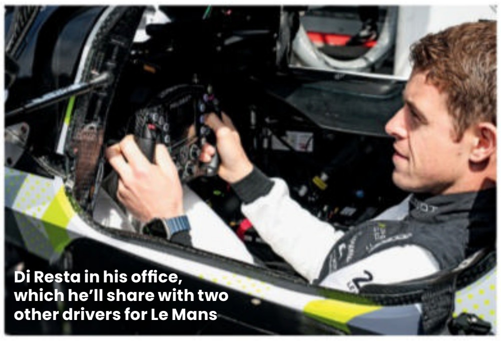
That changed with an invite from (McLaren F1 boss) Zak Brown to race for his United Autosports team in the LMP2 class of the 2018 Daytona 24 Hours. Di Resta joined the team full-time, winning the class at Le Mans in 2020. Alongside his Peugeot commitments in the World Endurance Championship he still races for United in the American IMSA category.

That success at United helped him land the Peugeot drive, and he is now a core part of its line-up. "Until you actually get here and experience it, you don't understand it," he says. "I've fallen in love with it, and the determination to win it is there. There's nothing like being on the Mulsanne straight in the middle of the night, counting down laps and just loving life." ▸

"You're thinking 'I'm not doing very much' but obviously going quickly"



Peugeot 9X8 hypercar has a 2.6-litre twin-turbo V6 and two electric motors



Di Resta in his office, which he'll share with two other drivers for Le Mans

Di Resta says some of the kerbs are best avoided for the sake of reliability

The scenery tends to be more of a blur during the race itself

The long straight ends at Mulsanne corner, although this is another point where the track makes a slight detour after local authorities built a roundabout on the junction of the D338 and D140 in 1986 to reduce accidents. That created a slight kink before the right-hander, which feels almost impossibly tight. "It's easy to carry too much speed into it," he says.

The road then blasts up towards the tough Indianapolis left-hander, followed by the tight Arnage right-hander. We stop at Indianapolis to examine the gravel trap that sits on the outside of the bend, which has caught out many unsuspecting drivers. Snapper Matt Howell wants a shot of di Resta in the gravel but is met with an emphatic "no way". Di Resta might be incredibly level-headed and analytical, but he isn't going to start tempting fate.

Carry on up the D139 and you reach the Porsche Curves. Along the way, di Resta notices that part of the road has been repaved. Teams are sent track data every year, but it hasn't been done yet so this new bit of asphalt isn't on Peugeot's radar. He's quick to text his race engineer. "You're always learning," he says. "The more information you have the better, so we're always looking for any edge."

Di Resta reckons the newly paved section could have quite an impact on performance, although he won't explain exactly why because he doesn't want to let slip any secrets about his Peugeot's performance.

The flowing Porsche Curves sequence is the most technical part of the track. It's di Resta's favourite section – and another key place to secure a good lap time. "Television doesn't do it justice," he says. "It doesn't show how quick the Porsche Curves are, or how the four chicanes test suspension compliance.

"The last sector of the circuit has a wide range of challenges, and if you've got a weak car it can throw a lap time away. In the middle of the night, if you come across traffic here timing is key – there's not much run-off."

Sadly, our approach speed is hampered by a big fence across the road. This is where the track departs from the road until the end of the lap, so we have to wait for an official in a van to turn up with a key and unlock a gate. We don't get much further: the section of track from here until the final Ford Chicane is now used for a Porsche driving experience centre. And while the e-3008 has been pleasingly pliant transport for lapping the roads, it might not fare well against 911 GT3s.

How well di Resta will fare at Le Mans this year is also uncertain. So far Peugeot has struggled to enjoy much success in the highly competitive Hypercar division, with some early radical design choices for the 9X8 not paying off. The team now races an updated version of the car, but two eighth places in the first three races shows there's still work to be done.

But at Le Mans there's always hope: a 'balance of performance' system aims to level the competition, and while Ferrari has won the first three races, some favourable performance boosts and the unique nature of the Le Mans circuit often upset the form book.

"There are more manufacturers in the WEC than any other championship," says di Resta, who shares his car with Jean-Éric Vergne and Mikkel Jensen. "It's ultra-competitive, so if you have a bad day it can be an extremely bad day. But Peugeot has had huge success in the past, and while we've not been able to recreate that yet, there will be lots of ups and downs. Any successful sport comes with these moments."

Still, regardless of where Peugeot sits on the lap charts when the 24-hour race gets under way, di Resta can be assured that it will be a lot quicker than his efforts today.

"The more information you have the better. We're always looking for any edge"

Di Resta takes Indianapolis the wrong way. Don't worry: he'll get it right for the race

LE MANS: BELIEVE THE HYPE

The top-level Hypercar class continues to grow for the 24 Hours of Le Mans, with a staggering 21 hypercars from eight different manufacturers on the entry list for this year's race on 14-15 June.

The Hypercar class is split into cars built to both LMH (Ferrari, Toyota, Peugeot and Aston Martin), and LMDh (Porsche, BMW, Cadillac and Alpine) rules, but performance balancing regulations means they should all be running at a similar pace.

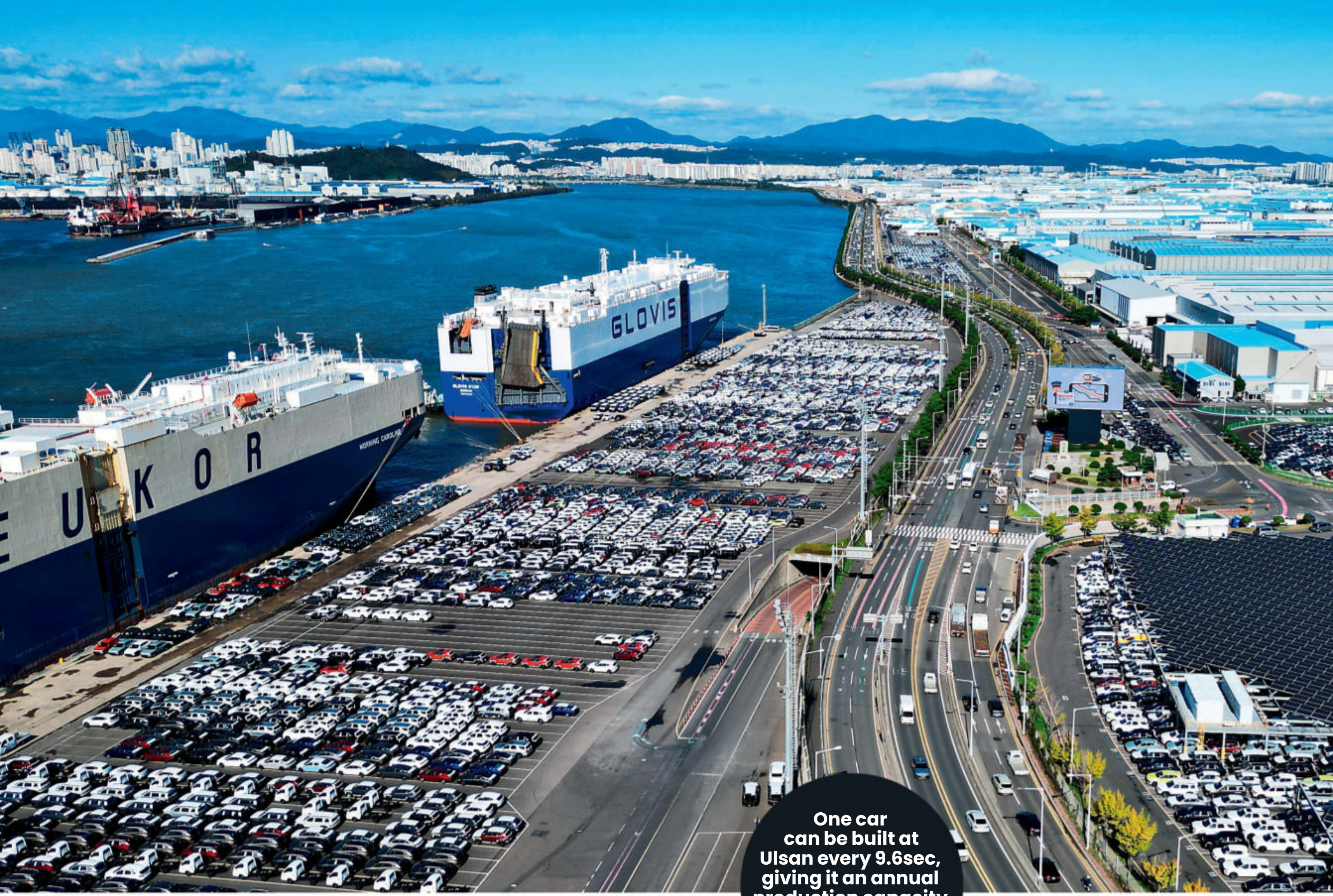
Having won all three World Endurance Championship rounds so far this year, Ferrari will start as favourites to take a third consecutive Le Mans win, but Toyota, BMW and Alpine have all taken the fight to the Scuderia in events so far this year.

The big arrival this year is the Aston Martin Valkyrie AMR-LMH, the racing version of Adrian Newey's road-going hypercar. It has been solid rather than spectacular in its outings so far.

The Hypercar class is hotly contested by eight different manufacturers

Appetite for production

Hyundai's Ulsan plant is the world's largest car-making facility, with five separate factories and an on-site port. **WILL RIMELL** is awestruck



One car can be built at Ulsan every 9.6sec, giving it an annual production capacity of 1.7 million. Last year, it made 1.52m.

Looking out from the bridge of the Morning Christina, the view is filled with thousands and thousands of factory-fresh Hyundai cars. Up to 6000 of them are being loaded onto the 11 decks of the 380-metre-long vessel, bound for California, across the Pacific Ocean. "It'll take about 13 days," says the ship's captain. "Then we'll come back and do it again."

This is the final step of a unique process in car manufacturing that is based here at Hyundai's Ulsan plant on the south-eastern coast of South Korea. With a dock literally on site, cars are built, tested and shipped all in one seamless operation.

How many cars are produced here? A staggering 1.5 million a year – that's almost double the UK's 2024 output from 25 factories, and it would have been enough to fulfil 98% of all new car sales in Italy last year. Welcome, then, to the world's largest vehicle plant.

Set on a 1200-acre site (the same size as the pretty Bedfordshire town of Tilsworth), the Ulsan plant's positioning is crucial to its effectiveness. As well as being home to five factories plus an engine and transmission plant, it is the only automotive production facility in the world to have a dedicated on-site port – one that ships 75% of its yearly output to more than 200 countries around the globe.

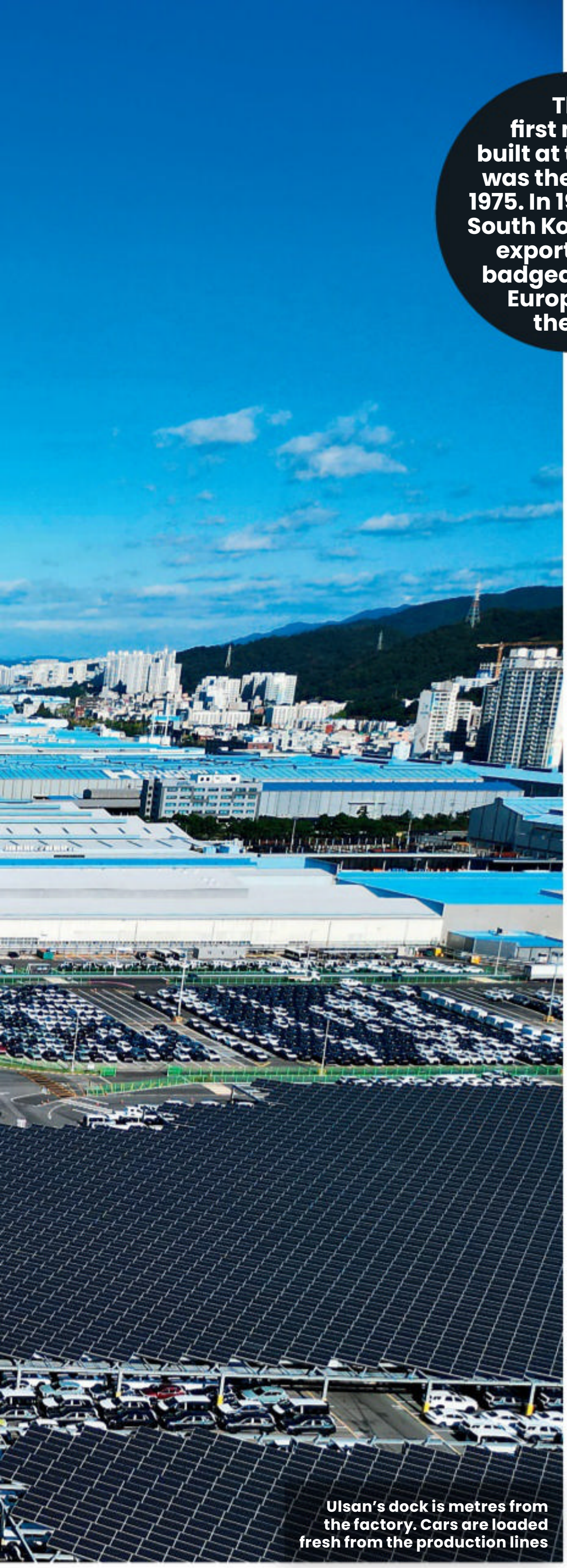
On site, 17 different models are produced, from the Hyundai Santa Fe and Tucson to the entire Genesis line-up. Production lines run for 18 hours a day. A sixth EV-only plant is on schedule to open next year, and it will build the upcoming Genesis GV90.

The Ulsan plant was opened in 1968 just a year after Hyundai itself was formed, and the site was originally established as a small Ford assembly facility, where Cortinas were hand-built for the local market.

Today, Ulsan is a behemoth, and on entering the site its size is immediately obvious. Factory after factory rolls past our window, as well as a lot of trees (around 600,000 of them), until we pull up at Plant 5. Built in 1979, the facility originally produced golf carts – by hand. Today, the Genesis G70, G80 and G90 saloons are made alongside the Hyundai Palisade and hydrogen-fuelled Nexo. Electric batteries for the G80 are also made here.

After they roll off the production line, and following a quality control check, finished cars are darted away to a huge car park at the

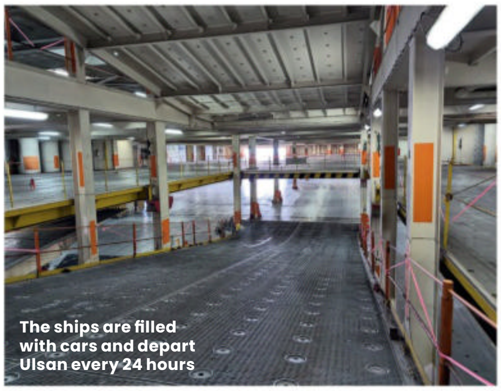
The first model built at the plant was the Pony, in 1975. In 1980 it was South Korea's first exported car, badged Excel in Europe and the US.



Ulsan's dock is metres from the factory. Cars are loaded fresh from the production lines

Next stop America – or one of 200 or so other countries to which Hyundai exports cars

> ***"Ulsan was a fishing port. Now it is South Korea's industrial hub"***



The ships are filled with cars and depart Ulsan every 24 hours

The enormous roll-on/roll-off vessels can each hold up to 6000 new cars

dockside. We follow their very short route and pull up alongside the huge Eukor roll-on/roll-off transport vessel. Such is the size of the ship that a Suzuki Carry is used for transport inside.

Cars are being loaded onto the ship via a steep ramp at the rear. Just minutes after a number of Elantras have blasted up it, the drivers – now on foot – race back down the ramp and jump into a Hyundai Staria to be driven to their next machines. It's a daily process, with one ship leaving the port every 24 hours. This unique way of producing and exporting cars saves both money and time, a factory manager tells us, and is a key reason why Hyundai can make so many vehicles each year.

The city of Ulsan that has grown around the plant is now home to 1.1 million people (roughly the same population as Birmingham). When ground was broken on the factory site in 1968, just 30,000 lived in the area – fewer than the 34,000 employed by the plant alone today.

Five years prior, Ulsan was primarily a fishing port. Now it is South Korea's industrial hub, formed by Hyundai Ulsan, neighbouring Hyundai Heavy Industries – the world's largest ship-building company that was spun off from its parent in 2002 – and the world's third-largest oil refinery, owned by SK Energy.

The company's importance is visible across the city: there's a motorway named after Hyundai's founder and many institutions – a hospital, a school, restaurants – bear the Hyundai name. And, of course, there's the vast port facility.

The port, the factory and the city that's grown around it are testament to Hyundai's incredible ambition. Our guide sums it up: "Ulsan is the city that made Hyundai what it is today." ■

The city of Ulsan has grown up around the Hyundai plant since 1968

Ulsan produces 1.5 million cars per year. More than 1000 workers live on site

LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"Undulations generate heave, but pitch and roll are well contained"

FIRST REPORT

MG CYBERSTER

Intriguing Chinese-built electric roadster joins the fleet

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT Can a two-seat roadster/grand tourer/sports car be both satisfying to own and drive and electric?

Autocar is playing host to an MG Cyberster for the next few months, and I'm to be its custodian.

This is a £60,000, battery-powered, two-seat roadster that goes from 0-62mph in 3.2sec and has electrically operating scissor doors. How far back in time would we have to travel before it would seem daft that a Chinese manufacturer might attempt to make a car as exotic and glamorous as this? I might suggest not very.

I thought comedian Denis Leary said this, but the internet tells me it was PJ O'Rourke, who wrote in 2010: "There are 1.3 billion people in China, and they all want a Buick." Well, now there are 1.4 billion Chinese, and they don't all want a Buick; they want to make something better than a Buick. In 2010, China was already making more cars than any other country in the world; now it's three times as many as the world's next most productive country, but more Chinese cars are domestic brands, not joint ventures with Western car makers. That stage is over.

MG is unusual here, because while it is now a domestic brand, owned by SAIC, the Chinese state-owned maker, it still plays on its British heritage, both here and there, and it retains design and engineering offices in the UK. In China, where you can buy a dual-motor Cyberster for £40,000, they even use an MGB roadster alongside it in adverts.

This dual-motor Cyberster, called the GT, sits at the top of a simple two-model range. The base car, the Trophy, has a single rear motor and 335bhp to give it a 0-62mph time of 5.0sec. The GT, though, supplements that with a motor driving the front wheels too for a system total of 503bhp and that sparkling 0-62mph time.

It retails at £59,995 and, like the £54,995 single-motor version, comes with the works: if you're looking for options, there's metallic paint at £545 or £595 and a £500 red hood option alongside some paint colours (but not red or yellow, presumably on grounds of taste).

There are two interior colour options, grey or red, both at £0. This one is red, and it's rather restrained. And that's it. MG is not one to make you delve into an options list. There is one wheel choice (20in alloys with Pirelli P Zero tyres, 245/40 fronts, 275/35 rears), heated seats, heated steering wheel, electric seats, electric hood, electric doors, a Bose stereo, adaptive cruise control, vehicle-to-load capability and more ADAS than are mandatory.

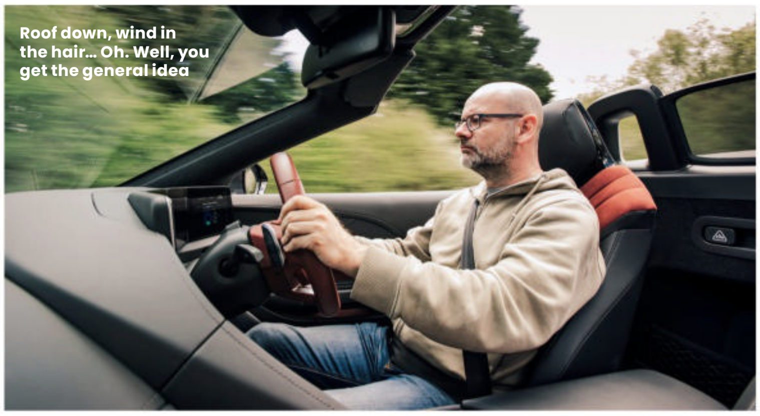
I'll expand on the ADAS another time, because the attention assist function is the worst performing of the lot and seemingly the only one that can't be switched off.

SECOND OPINION

It may be a two-seat roadster with big wheels, scissor doors and lots of power, but a sports car? No, this MG isn't that. There's a place for a car that looks cool, can go quickly and otherwise takes a more relaxed attitude to life, mind. If only its driver assistance systems would do the same. **IV**

Both variants of the Cyberster have a 74.4kWh (usable) battery capacity, and this GT a 3.2mpkWh combined-cycle rating with a 276-mile WLTP range. I'm seeing more like 250, but I'll keep an eye on it. Its maximum charge speed is 144kW, but so far I've charged it only at home. I'll keep an eye on that, too.

The MG will take some getting used to. There is an instrument binnacle, a screen either side of



Roof down, wind in the hair… Oh. Well, you get the general idea

MG's drive modes range from relaxed Comfort to harum-scarum Track

Controls are spread across wheel, centre console and touchscreen

it controlled via steering wheel buttons and a central touchscreen, with functions spread throughout. There are steering wheel paddles, the left for changing the retardation rate, the right for flicking through drive modes, which include a custom one: you can choose drivetrain and steering response.

In default Comfort mode the car only uses the rear motor, I think, given more leisurely acceleration and slight rear-wheel scrabble on driveway exit; sportier modes introduce the front motor and up the responses until they're at pretty remarkable levels in Track mode.

The chassis does its best to keep up. This is a heavy car, particularly for a two-seater of, by today's standards, reasonable proportions, being 4.54m long by 1.91m wide (2.1m including mirrors). It's 1985kg at the kerb (the single-motor variant is a full 100kg lighter), so the non-adjustable, passively damped suspension has the unenviable job of both keeping on top of body movements and retaining the kind of ride compliance MG would like the Cyberster to have. MG does talk of "uncompromising power and performance", but at the same time this version is called GT, and the company mentions giving "the grand touring experience".

That's a fine path to tread with relatively unsophisticated underpinnings. I haven't tried a single-motor car, which the testers say is softer; I haven't quite decided which way, if either, I'd want this to go. Big surface undulations generate some heave, but pitch and roll are well contained. The centre of gravity is low, after all.

That there are batteries beneath you means you don't feel nestled deep into the interior, but neither do I feel like I sit precariously on top of it, like our taller testers did. The fact that we have a car like this at all, though, and that MG is the first one to give it to us, shows how far the company has come and how fast. How quickly this car work its way into our affections, we'll find out.

MATT PRIOR

TEST DATA

MG CYBERSTER GT

Price new £59,995 **Price as tested** £60,540 **Options** Camden Grey metallic paint £545 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 276 miles (WLTP) **Economy** 3.2mpkWh (WLTP)

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matthew.prior@haymarket.com

Swift squeezes into the tightest of spaces – or this ginormous one if you prefer

SUZUKI SWIFT

Adventures into central London cement its city car credentials

MILEAGE 10,605
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see if this latest incarnation has maintained that trademark no-frills appeal

I first became acquainted with the latest Swift at a Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders vehicle test day, where Suzuki was stationed and its entire model range available to be driven.

I was besotted. Its poised, neutral-feeling chassis and tactile steering were a delight, as was its incredibly satisfying manual gearbox. So when photographer Jack Harrison rocked up in his Swift long-termer, I leapt at the chance to drive one again.

And yes, while it is brilliant to have a small, light car with an economical petrol engine and a clutch pedal, I used the Suzuki for something slightly different: getting to know London.

I still don't know the intricacies of the capital's tight, complicated and incredibly busy road network. But what better car in which to learn it than one with a light clutch, great all-round visibility and an engine with decent low-down grunt?

The Swift feels made for this sort of thing: negotiating width restrictions, dodging aggressively driven delivery vans and squeezing past buses. There are plenty of obstacles no matter where you go in London. But like a Border Terrier at Crufts, the Swift negotiates them with a plucky, fun sense of determination and keenness.

It also isolates you well from the hubbub. Suzuki added extra soundproofing for this generation, plus extra baffle plates in the A-pillars and thicker carpets. As a result, the car feels almost as refined as a Volkswagen Polo or Renault Clio, but with the incisive dynamics typical of a small Suzuki.

Fitting into tight parking spaces is easy, too, aided by good visibility and light steering, and it being narrower than a Clio and Polo means I need not avoid the Hogarth Flyover – a narrow bridge whose width restrictions have claimed many mirrors and layers of paint.

The one problem with these compact proportions is that the 265-litre boot is one of the smallest in the class. In my time with it, I had to decline a friend's request to take their Labrador to the park.

My time in the car ended with a motorway stint to Kent. Over the one-and-a-half-hour, 60-mile journey, the Swift averaged 63mpg: pretty impressive considering most of it was in stop-start traffic.

If you need right-size, economical transport for a tight, congested city, you can do far worse than the Swift.

JONATHAN BRYCE

LOVE IT

BIG, BEAUTIFUL BUTTONS
I like how big and chunky the Swift's heated seat buttons are. No need to take your gloves off on a cold day to operate them.

LOATHE IT

FEELING THE STRAIN
Most of the time (99% of it), the Swift's 1.2-litre engine is quiet enough, but stray above 4000rpm and it can begin to sound slightly strained.

TEST DATA

SUZUKI SWIFT 1.2 MILD HYBRID MOTION

Price new £19,899 **Price as tested** £20,599 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 54.2mpg **Last seen** 21.5.25

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jack.harrison@haymarket.com

MINI ACEMAN

A small-battery EV could make sense if charging were always this easy

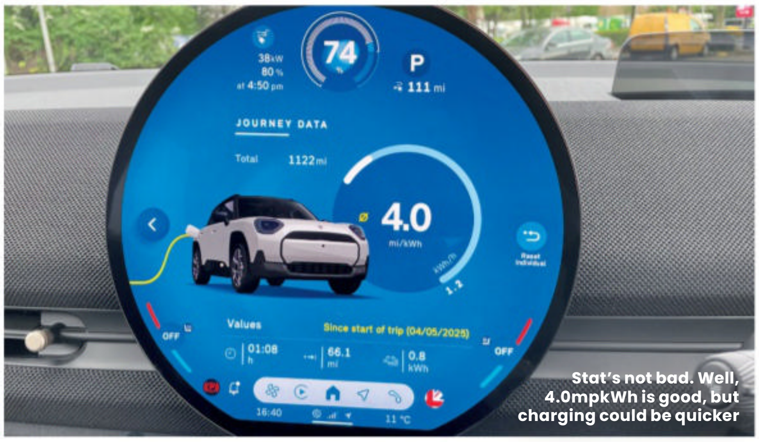
MILEAGE 1192
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To find out how easy it is to live with a small-battery EV in 2025

When I wrote the 'hello' report for my Mini Aceman recently, I posited some questions to consider in the time it will be with me, which is standard fare. But being able to answer one of those questions so quickly – or at least answer it with a small asterisk – was quite unexpected.

A reminder: this is the version of the Aceman that's powered by the little 38.5kW (usable capacity) battery. Theoretical range is 190 miles, but we know it isn't that in real life. As a thought experiment, the suggestion was that there might some day be a point at which small-battery EVs would make more sense than they do today – you know, once we get efficiency up and the charging infrastructure more reliable. And, believe it or not, a recent experience with said infrastructure was so good that I'm already coming round to the idea of owning a small-battery EV.

I was heading to Milton Keynes-ish to see my brother, go to a gig and then head home again – roughly a 160-mile round trip and theoretically achievable on a single charge. But I know better. And he doesn't have a charger. So filling up with watts en route was on the menu.

I'm working at becoming less anally retentive so decided not to triangulate air temperature, wind speed and number of chargers per capita in order to find somewhere to replenish the battery: I simply selected a motorway service station that would be most convenient for the journey. In this case, it was Newport Pagnell services on the M1, where I was greeted by a nearly empty set (save for a Maxus eDeliver 3 van) of 15 180kW chargers from Applegreen Electric, a company I hadn't heard of before.



Stat's not bad. Well, 4.0mpkWh is good, but charging could be quicker

Service stations up and down the country have delivered both good experiences and bad ones, but this was the easiest and quickest set-up I have yet encountered. For a start, the charger actually worked, so no time was wasted finding another one. And there was no sign-up nonsense – nothing to fill in at all, in fact. Tap bank card, take charger out, stick in car, go and use the lavs, wait until it had charged enough, tap card again, take charger out of car, leave. While UK law now states that all new fast chargers need to accept contactless card payment, there are still so many older ones about that this remains something to celebrate.

Anyway, the car did annoy me slightly during this process. The chargers may offer 180kW, but this Aceman can pull in only 70kW. Looking at the infographic supplied by Applegreen, it peaked at only 62.6kW and averaged 41.5kW. There are too many variables to list here (I also charged it beyond 80%) to get truly annoyed, but still… It is semi-annoying that my local chargers provide 22kW but the Aceman can accept only 11kW, and motorway service stations are now providing fairly seamless 180kW solutions, yet the Mini can only charge at 70kW. At best.

Anyway, this jaunt also taught me a few more things about the car. It averaged 4.0mpkWh, which really isn't shabby at all for motorway work. This was probably helped somewhat by a 50mph limit on the M25, but I wasn't on an efficiency run and had the heating set as normal, and I otherwise drove at speeds I would ordinarily do.

The ride at a motorway cruise is fantastic. Really top notch. And the old-fashioned 'unintelligent' cruise control is so handy: two buttons to set up and one switch to change speed. And it will let you get as close as you like to the car in front!

It's such a shame this particular Aceman seems so at odds with what I think small-battery EVs should be good at – which is driving around town, where the ride is still rotten and I wince at potholes, speed bumps and drain covers.

MURRAY SCULLION

LOVE IT

CRUISING IN COMFORT

It's proving to be fabulously comfortable on the motorway, with a lovely long gait.

LOATHE IT

SPLIT PERSONALITY

The Aceman seems at odds with itself: it's good on the motorway but less adept in the city.

TEST DATA

MINI ACEMAN E CLASSIC

Price new £28,905 **Price as tested** £31,445 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 136 miles **Economy** 4.1mpkWh **Last seen** 21.5.25

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CUPRA LEON ESTATE

A dawn blast along twisting roads can wait no longer

MILEAGE 7801
WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT With sports car pace and dog-friendly space, could this rapid wagon be the ultimate do-it-all daily driver?

Appearances can deceive: it's a sure-footed 4WD hot hatch with near-M2 pace

I awoke early on Saturday in a cold sweat to the shuddering realisation that my last 1000 miles in our Cupra Leon had been all but entirely covered on the motorway. No hardship – this is a comfortable and refined tourer – but hardly the point of a thrill-seeking four-wheel-drive hot hatch. So I leapt out of bed and headed for the hills.

The Surrey Hills, to be precise. I've found a pretty engaging network of switchbacks around Dorking that tend to be nice and quiet if you get up before the Ranmore ramblers and all the cyclists, and not so atrociously surfaced as to dampen their appeal as a dawn-blast destination.

All right, it's not the Transfăgărășan, but it's more than sufficient to give the Leon a good run and probe its dynamic limits – with the added benefit that it's twisty and narrow enough for you to give it the beans between bends and still stay on the right side of the law.

Best to remain cautious, though: this is a seriously quick car, needing just 4.8sec to haul itself from rest to 62mph, which is not far off a BMW M2. It's easy to forget that outrageous pace while trundling up the M40 or negotiating suburban rush-hour traffic, but flick it into full-bore Cupra mode (manual shifts, louder exhaust note, angry red screen graphics) and floor it off the mark and you will be rewarded with a surprisingly visceral and exciting accelerative experience that's usually the preserve of much more exotic metal. Don't forget this thing has five doors and a boot big enough for a few Labradors, so there's an element of incongruity to enjoy in its performance potential.

It's pretty unflappable dynamically too. Four-wheel drive means it rigidly holds traction off the line even on damp surfaces, and you can feel the trick torque-splitting rear differential working to tighten your line in fast, tight bends, which ultimately gives you the confidence to throw it in faster.

A common criticism of hot hatches based on the VW Group's MQB platform over the years (Golfs GTI and R, Skoda Octavia vRS, Audi S3 etc) is that they tend to come up short on feel and driver reward, but I think the Cupra goes some way to redressing the balance, with steering that's nicely weighted and highly communicative without feeding too much of the road's imperfections back to you.

You can fiddle more intricately with the chassis and steering settings in the Individual drive mode, but I find the factory set-up perfectly agreeable for daily use and Cupra mode does what I'd do before hitting a fun-looking B-road in any case, so I've not been minded to extensively sample each of the 15 (!) damping settings. However, I do quite enjoy flicking the exhaust into Pure mode, which turns off the artificial engine note enhancer and opens up the valves for maximum burble. A touch antisocial but fine for special occasions.

In short, it was one of the most engaging couple of hours I've had on the road for some time. And the best bit? It returned 33mpg on the more sensible drive home, whereupon I threw open the boot and loaded it up with tonnes of rubbish for the tip. What an all-rounder.

FELIX PAGE

LOVE IT

DRIVER AIDS SELECTION

You still shouldn't have to deactivate certain driver aids before setting off, but it is at least very easy to do so in the Leon.

LOATHE IT

IT'S NO OPEN CHAMP

The full-width light bar means there is no button to open the boot, and nor is there one of those foot-waggling sensors. A silly concession to style.

TEST DATA

CUPRA LEON ESTATE 333PS 4DRIVE VZ2

Price new £48,410 **Price as tested** £49,105 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 33.7mpg **Last seen** 21.5.25

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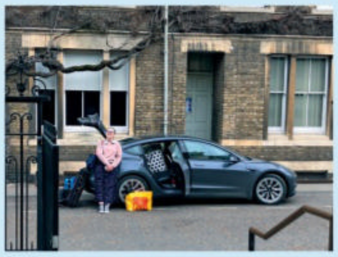
These roads suit the Leon well – as they do cyclists – so it pays to get up early

SNAPSHOTS

BENTLEY BENTAYGA

Mileage 16,799 **Last seen** 28.5.23
Having clearly learned high standards from his mother, my four-year-old observed that the colour of the car on the 360deg camera on the touchscreen did not match the colour of the actual car. Details, details, yes but wouldn't that be a lovely touch on a model worth a quarter of a mill? **RB**



TESLA MODEL 3

Mileage 42,102 **Last seen** 21.5.25
The Model 3's shape suggests that it should be a hatchback, but it's actually a conventional booted saloon. That hurts its ultimate load-loading potential, yet it's remarkably roomy nonetheless, with boots front and rear (for a total of 425 litres) plus back seats that fold. So it's huge cargo-carrying capacity is easily enough for my daughter's university drop-off run, and its exemption from Oxford's Zero Emission Zone is handy too. **AC**

BMW 1 SERIES

Mileage 3030 **Last seen** 28.5.25
I can't abide having my steering wheel tugged or being irritated by an alarm because I'm doing 21mph in a 20mph zone. So me turning off ADAS doesn't in itself indicate bad tech. The main thing for me is how easy it is to prevent such nonsense. In the BMW, the lane keeping requires three taps of the screen – not ideal. But the speed limit warning requires simply a long press of the 'set' button on the steering wheel – easy as could be! **KC**

USED CARS

HOW TO BUY A MAZDA 6

THE ALTERNATIVE EXECUTIVE OPTION WITH REAL 6 APPEAL

Mazda's understated big saloon and estate make great used buys

Think 'executive saloon' and your mind's eye probably sees a BMW, Audi or Mercedes-Benz. But the Germans haven't always had this market segment to themselves, so if you're on the lookout for something a little left-field but which still majors on economy, practicality and engagement (plus a touch of style), then consider the third-generation Mazda 6.

All versions of Hiroshima's high-miler were handsome and well received, but the Mk3 of 2013 brought generational changes in the form of clever powertrain tech and bucketloads of kerb appeal that today make it a particularly canny used buy – not least because it avoids the same sort of badge tax as its German contemporaries.

Mazda's Skyactiv tech centred on maximising the efficiency of its four-cylinder petrol and diesel engines without unduly denting performance. By giving both engines the same basic structure and an identical 14:1 compression ratio, the 6 could extract more energy from less fuel, with a claimed 15% increase in fuel economy and correspondingly lower CO_2 emissions.

That makes for some pretty agreeable running cost figures, most closely associated with the 2.2-litre diesel four-pots, with either 148bhp or 173bhp. Both do around 45mpg day to day, but expect even greater efficiency on the motorway, with 55mpg in sight.

Opt for the manual 'box (which offers more driver engagement) over the six-speed auto and you will pay a maximum of £35 road tax, too.

Post-2015 facelift 6s enjoyed an equipment and material upgrade

What we said then

23 JANUARY 2013

"The verdict for the 6 rings, in some ways, to its familiar tune. Credibility and respectability abound, with some familiar complaints and some familiar virtues. The way the latest 6 drives is, as usual, among the finest in the class, with a sense of engagement and involvement all too often lacking in family cars."

The oil-burners are refined, too: there's no clatter from under the bonnet, and while 8.0sec to 62mph doesn't sound impressive on paper, you won't find it wanting on slip-roads, and its throttle response is surprisingly good for a diesel.

You can also have the 6 with a 2.0-litre petrol four making either 143bhp or 163bhp. The entry-level petrol lacks pace, and while the more powerful lump provides more pep, it can get vocal at higher revs.

Regardless of powertrain, the 6 rides comfortably and settles into a cruise with ease. It can come undone at lower speeds, where it struggles to iron out potholes and sharp edges. That said, it delivers on the agility front and is far more rewarding to punt down a B-road run than a Ford Mondeo or Volkswagen Passat. It feels nimble and has accurate steering, and the body is kept well in check.

The saloon has a 480-litre boot, which is more than good enough for a few suitcases or golf clubs, but if you're hauling pushchairs and the other clobber that comes with having a family, the estate is more practical, giving up to 1648 litres with the seats folded.

You can grab a 6 for less than £2000, but this will tie you to well-used examples with well over 100,000 miles on the clock; with a budget of around £6000, you will easily find a tidy saloon or estate.

Material quality is a mixed bag in early models, so we would at least aim for a facelifted 2015 example, which has decent kit across the range, plusher materials and a neater 7.0in infotainment screen.

The 6 was facelifted again in 2018 and received a new 2.5-litre 191bhp petrol engine, but they're a rare find and don't really offer much more performance. You will pay around £9000 for one, too.

Whatever your budget, though, the 6 is a brilliant all-rounder that still looks as suave and sophisticated as it did when launched more than 10 years ago.

SAM PHILLIPS

The 6 steers nicely and is agile and engaging to drive on a B-road

"If you're hauling pushchairs and other family clobber, the estate is more practical"

How to get one in your garage

AN OWNER'S VIEW

STEVE GARNER

"I bought my 2019 6 GT Tourer in February 2023 because I wanted something that was both versatile and capable. Mine has the 2.5 petrol with an automatic gearbox and great kit like adaptive cruise control, which is handy, because I do around 25,000 miles a year, mostly on motorways. It's serviced with Mazda every 12,500 miles, and the only bills on top of that have been for new brake discs and pads. Overall, It has been utterly reliable. It might look like a dull generic estate, but it's really a lovely car to own and drive."

BUYER BEWARE...

■ ENGINE

Diesel particulate filters (DPFs) can get locked if the car is turned off during a regeneration cycle. This can lead to oil dilution, reducing lubrication in the engine and causing rapid timing chain wear or even failure. Oil pump failure or a blocked oil pick-up can lead to high oil pressure. Check the car's history to see if the pump has been replaced.

Inlet manifolds and EGR valves are known for clogging up with carbon, which can restrict airflow and reduce fuel efficiency. These will need to be chemically cleaned or walnut blasted (no, really, it's a thing).

Water pumps can also fail and cause the engine to overheat or coolant to leak out. This will need to be replaced and should cost around £60-£80.

■ TURBOCHARGER

The twin-turbocharger set-up in the diesel can also fail, costing anywhere between £500 and £1000 to replace. If you feel a loss of power or see blue smoke on your test drive, look elsewhere.

■ BODY

The paint finish is quite thin, so inspect the bodywork, particularly the bumpers and bonnet, for scrapes and scuffs.

■ AUDIO

Check for white noise or a muffled sound when testing a car with the Bose audio system. The amplifier is usually the culprit; it will cost around £100, or less if you can source a used one.

■ INTERIOR

Make sure the fabric trim on the door cards is still in good shape, as it can come loose and start to look shabby. Frozen infotainment screens can typically be fixed by turning the car off and back on again. If that doesn't work, it will need a software update.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

Staying on top of servicing can help maintain the life of a 6, particularly one with a diesel engine. Be sure to change the oil and oil filter every 6000 miles or every 12 months, whichever comes first.

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£1900-£6999

Early cars with more than 100,000 miles on the clock. Clear signs of hard use, but the odd full-history or one-owner examples available. Diesels dominate.

£7000-£9999

Post-2015 facelifted cars with around 50-70k miles on the clock. More petrols available, with good mix of estates and saloons.

£10,000-£13,999

More 2018 facelifted examples available, but be sure to shop around, as mileages can vary.

£14,000-£17,999

Very clean cars, predominantly sold through dealerships. More saloons than estates, most of which have a petrol engine.

£18,000 AND ABOVE

Nearly new cars in excellent condition. Most have dealer service histories and just the one previous owner.

ONE WE FOUND

MAZDA 6 2.2 SKYACTIV-D SPORT NAV TOURER, 2016, 81,000 MILES, £7495

This facelifted 6 estate is ideal for commuting and long family trips to the coast. It's a frugal diesel and will only cost £35 to tax annually. It also has a full history and a 12-month MOT.

My car & I

The bar is open in this well-stocked Bentley

As in-car options go, the cocktail cabinet in the rear of Michael Marshall-Clarke's immaculate 1999 Bentley Turbo RL is hard to beat. Double-height, illuminated and complete with its original set of lead crystal tumblers, it alone cost £20,000, or around 10% of the car's £195,000 price when new.

"Apparently, the first owner didn't like the Rolls-Royce cocktail accoutrements," explains Michael. "So he had the car sent to Hoopers, which designed the bespoke cabinet and reconfigured the centre console to accommodate it."

That wasn't the only change he requested. The Bentley's headlining is full hide and cost £2500, while its interior is actually from another car.

"The gentleman didn't like the regular Turbo R seats, so he asked Rolls-Royce to replace them with the seats from a Silver Spur, together with that model's interior," says Michael. "Rolls didn't want to, but he was a good customer, so they agreed. As far as I know, the car is unique."

Since Michael is a board director of the Rolls-Royce Enthusiasts Club, we've no reason to doubt him.

The 'L' of 'RL' in the Bentley's name means it's a long-wheelbase Turbo R with an extra 100mm in the body, making it almost 5.4m long. It

Our cars

Supermarket swipe spoils the day

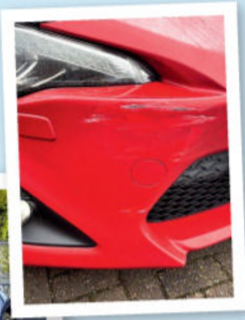
BY JONATHAN BRYCE

I drove my GT86 to the supermarket the other day, and to prevent it from coming to any harm, I parked it as far away from the shop as possible. But when I returned, a new and pretty significant scrape had appeared on the front bumper. Brilliant.

After driving it home, I attempted to wipe away the bulk of the damage with T-Cut, but that didn't make the situation any better.

Needless to say, when I called a local garage to get a quote, my expression was even more glum: a mighty £1500 later and all but my wallet were back to normal – or so I thought.

A new issue has arisen with the central locking system: I press the lock button on the key fob and there's a 50/50 chance whether it will actually lock or not. And because the key is playing up, the ignition is also being temperamental. Pressing the start/stop button might not actually start – or indeed stop – the engine.



Scrape dented wallet too; key fob issues are currently stopping play

As a result, I'm not driving the '86 nearly as much as I would like to. When I do take it for the odd punt, it's mechanically faultless and goes some way towards re-solidifying my perception of Toyota's reputation for reliability.

So what happens now? I'm in the process of trying to find out what's wrong with the key. It's a frustrating problem, because I'm sure it isn't the battery, which was replaced very recently. If there are any GT86 experts and/or key fob specialists reading this, your opinions are most welcome.

The 5.4m-long Turbo needs space to park; time for a drinky-poo?

This Bentley was specced from new with a Rolls interior

"As fuel is used and weight shifts, the system keeps the car level"

weighs 2500kg and should drive like a bus, but Michael says that at last year's Spa Classic he got it to 125mph before his passenger pointed out that a corner was approaching. "I was aiming to get it to the claimed 155mph," he adds ruefully.

He was impressed with the car's handling, though. "Rolls-Royce Shadows wallow about, but the Bentley's suspension is stiffer and you sit lower," he says. "It was supremely comfortable and went like stink."

He explains that the Bentley has a combination of traditional suspension springs and a hydraulic fluid system derived from Citroën that powers the brakes and ensures the ride height remains level. "Even as the fuel is used and the weight shifts, the system keeps the car level," he says.

In addition to its various extras and options, which include a large Motorola phone from the days before mobiles, the Bentley has a red pinstripe along its body.

"The car's first owner was the chairman of the Red Carnation hotel group, and the red pinstripe was a nod to the firm's colours," says Michael.

Sadly, the gentleman died, which is how Michael came to buy his cherished Bentley in a probate sale three years ago.

Unusually for such a car, it had done 79,000 miles, a high-ish figure that might concern some potential buyers – but not Michael. "If you buy a low-mileage Bentley like this, you often have to spend a lot of money on it," he says. "It's best to buy one with a higher mileage." Good advice, except that Michael admits he's spent £16,000 bringing it up to scratch. "It had stood for a while, so the brakes and hydraulics needed work, and I had new ECUs for the injection system fitted."

Michael has two other cars – a 1974 Rolls Silver Shadow and a 1972 Rolls Corniche convertible – but he has still notched up 10,000 miles in the Bentley. However, a lack of parking space (he lives in central London) means he's selling it: "The market is down but, because it's unique and has had just two owners including me, I'd like around £28,000 for it." In other words, a cocktail cabinet plus eight grand.

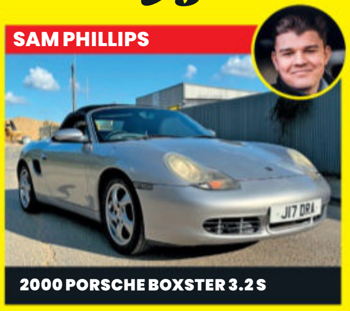
JOHN EVANS

Head to head

JONATHAN BRYCE

2009 BMW 123D COUPE

VS



SAM PHILLIPS

2000 PORSCHE BOXSTER 3.2 S

Brief: Find a dirt-cheap, rear-wheel-drive, manual car that's fun to drive – and has an MOT

SP Six cylinders, a soft top and a manual 'box: this 986 Boxster S is a steal at £3950. It's no concours winner, but it looks mint (well, in the pics) and has an MOT until August.

JB Fun, rear-driven and manual, right? Here is the most powerful diesel 1 Series of its time. At £2795, it's £1155 cheaper than your car and has more optional extras than most other cars for the money.

SP Okay, well done for hitting the first part of the brief, but what's fun about a 170,000-mile four-pot diesel? My 252bhp Porsche has done only 92,000 miles, and it's a true driver's car, thanks to its excellent chassis and engine.

JB A valid argument: who wants diesel? Except this diesel is just 0.9sec slower to 62mph than your petrol and has 75lb ft more torque and the promise of 55mpg.

SP Wow, your car has more torque… but it's still slower than my 25-year-old one. Sure, that BMW lump is efficient, but economy is irrelevant when it comes to rear-driven, manual cars. It's all about the driving, and my Boxster S has your 123d licked.

JB Yes, a Boxster will be fun, but so will my BMW. Especially one that's nine years younger than yours and has a longer MOT.

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

BMW 760Li

2015, 54,000 miles, £23,990

Want a luxury saloon with real performance? This low-mileage 7 Series has a twin-turbo petrol V12 with 537bhp and 552lb ft for 0-62mph in a rapid 4.6sec. It also has a full main dealer history and a huge spec that includes digital TV screens.

AUDI A8 4.2 TDI SPORT QUATTRO

2007, 63,000 miles, £9490

Here's a diesel A8 that cost more than £60,000 new but is now yours for less than £10k. With one previous owner with a full Audi history, this luxury limo has been very well maintained. Its alloy wheels were recently refurbished and it was given a full service and MOT.

ASTON MARTIN RAPIDE V12

2011, 26,000 miles, £34,950

This low-mileage Rapide is appropriately finished in Casino Royal paint. Many will buy it for its opulent interior that features heated seats all round and a Bang & Olufsen hi-fi. We'd buy it for its 470bhp V12 – and the soundtrack that goes with it.

ROLLS-ROYCE PHANTOM

2005, 105,000 miles, £39,995

A cheap Roller could be a risk, but this one passed its recent MOTs without fault and looks to be in good condition. It has done a fair few miles, but not many cars can match the Phantom for luxury appeal.

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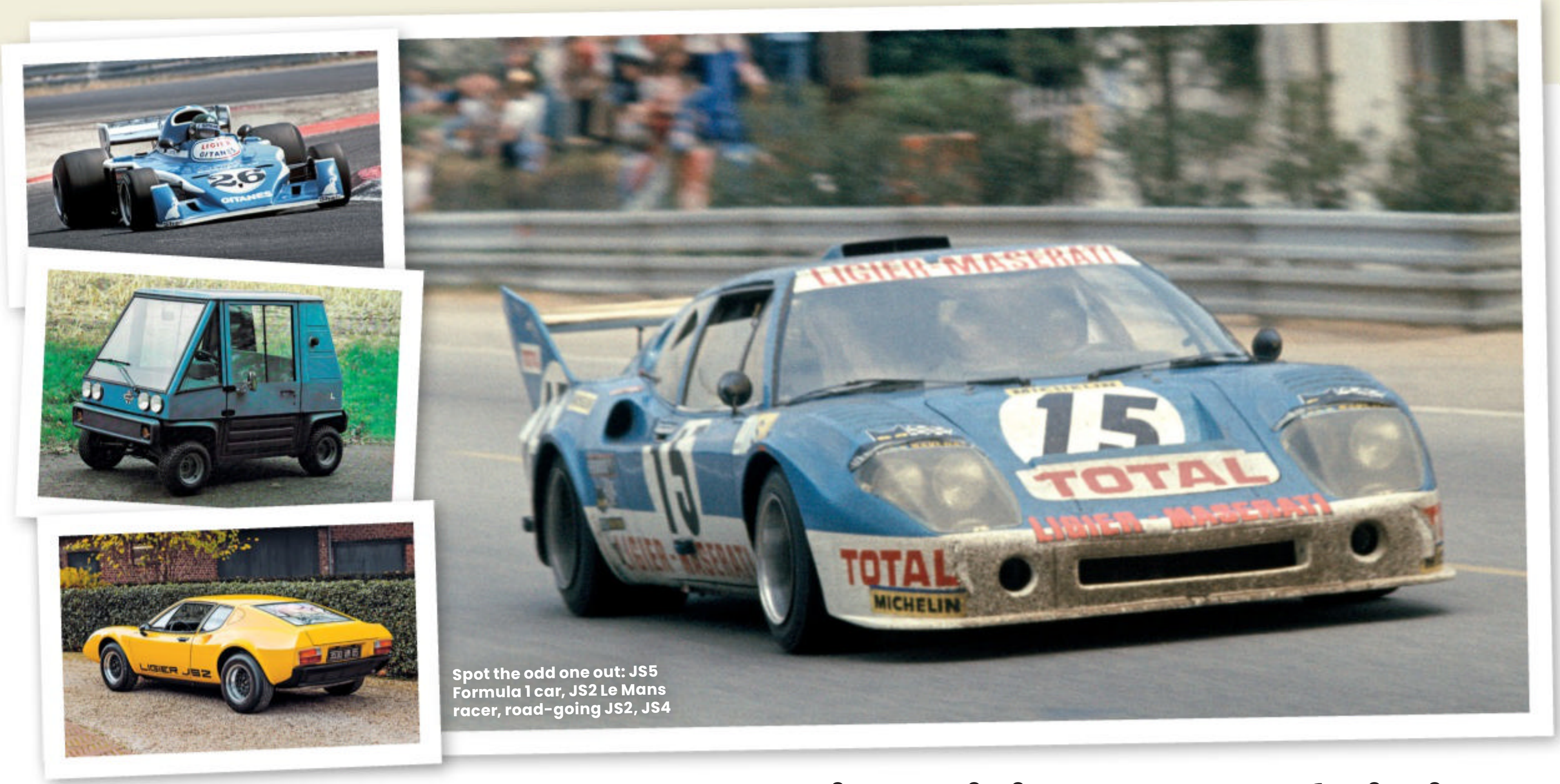


Spot the odd one out: JS5 Formula 1 car, JS2 Le Mans racer, road-going JS2, JS4

From butcher to F1: the inspiring tale of Ligier

The name 'Ligier' first appeared in Autocar in March 1964, on the entry list for the forthcoming Le Mans 24 Hours. Driving for the French importer of Porsches, Guy Ligier would finish seventh in a 904. It had taken the 33-year-old seven years to reach this point since entering his first car race – a rise that was inspiringly self-propelled.

Ligier had lost his father, a Vichy farmer, aged seven and left school at 14 with no qualifications, finding work as a butcher's assistant.

He showed an early aptitude for sport, becoming an excellent rower, playing international rugby while doing his national service (giving him, Autocar would later describe, "a taste for competition, stubbornness and a resistance to hard blows, as well as team spirit") and latterly racing motorcycles.

Determined to make something of himself, in 1960 Ligier bought a used bulldozer and pulled 18-hour days shifting earth. Before long, his business had 1000 staff and was worth millions, being a key contractor in France's construction of autoroutes. His secret? "Accept the most difficult job and do it quicker than your competitors."

Two years after his Le Mans debut, in 1966, Ligier entered Formula 1, buying a Cooper and making his debut at Monaco. He was lucky to escape a crash later that year at the Nürburgring and had to buy a new car for 1967. But nor was this Brabham competitive, and so a 'disgusted' Ligier walked away after 13 grands prix, in which his finest finish was a point-scoring eighth.

Ligier next set about building cars of his own – the first of them a GT. For the chassis, he hired an engineer from French sports car racing specialist CD; for the body, he contracted Italian coachbuilder Frua; and for the powertrain, he sourced a Ford Cosworth V6 engine and a Hewland manual gearbox.

The car was named the JS1, after Jo Schlesser – Ligier's close friend, another self-made man, with whom he had owned a Shelby dealership in Paris, recently killed in an F1 crash.

The car was a near-immediate success on track, and work soon started on an upgraded model, the JS2, with a punchier version of the Maserati V6 that powered the Citroën SM (production of which moved to Vichy as part of the deal).

We drove a road-going version of the plastic-bodied coupé in 1975 and relayed: "The car is like its builder. It rests solidly on its four wide tyres and gives the impression of being squat, virile, even aggressive.

"Its performances matches that impression. A standing kilometre is covered in little more than 27sec; the V6 pulls strongly once it is 'on the cam' above 3500rpm.

"Although the suspension is harsh at low speeds it smooths out beautifully when cruising more quickly, and indeed its overall comfort is possibly class-leading.

"Around town, the JS2 is a misery to drive, for several reasons. But it changes the moment it is shown an open road. Its steering is in all respects very nearly perfect. It corners very well, with excellent feel. It all adds up to a car of astonishing potential, and one which is a real pleasure to drive."

The car's high point came at Le Mans that summer, when it finished second by a single lap, albeit powered by a Cosworth V8.

Ligier came to yet greater attention in 1976, as he returned to grands prix with his own car, the Matra V12-engined JS5. Driver Jacques Laffite achieved three podiums that year, then added Ligier's first win in the 1977 JS7.

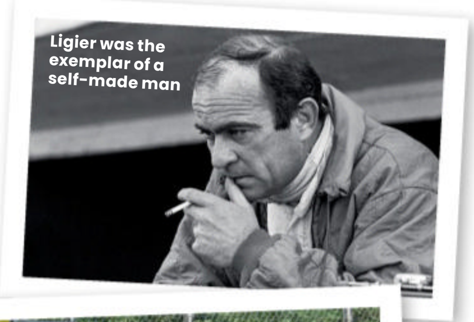
Adding a second car for 1979, Ligier had the makings of a title contender, winning regularly.

After all this, it was baffling to us when at the 1980 Paris motor show, Ligier unveiled a 49cc two-stroke microcar with all the shapeliness of a tractor cabin… because that was what it was. Ever entrepreneurial, Guy manufactured these for Renault Trucks and had seen an easy way to capitalise on the blooming market for 'voitures sans permis' – drivable in France by people as young as 14.

While the JS4 proved the first in a string of successful microcars, Équipe Ligier never hit the same heights again after 1981 – although it did get a poetic ending in its final season, 1996, as Olivier Panis won a race of severe attrition in Monaco.

Guy died in 2015, aged 85, with his business passed to his son Phillipe. It's now the biggest microcar maker and races in a variety of disciplines, Le Mans included. All that's really missing is a road-going sports car…

KRIS CULMER



Ligier was the exemplar of a self-made man

Ligiers still race today; GT4-class JS2 R is styled after its '70s namesake

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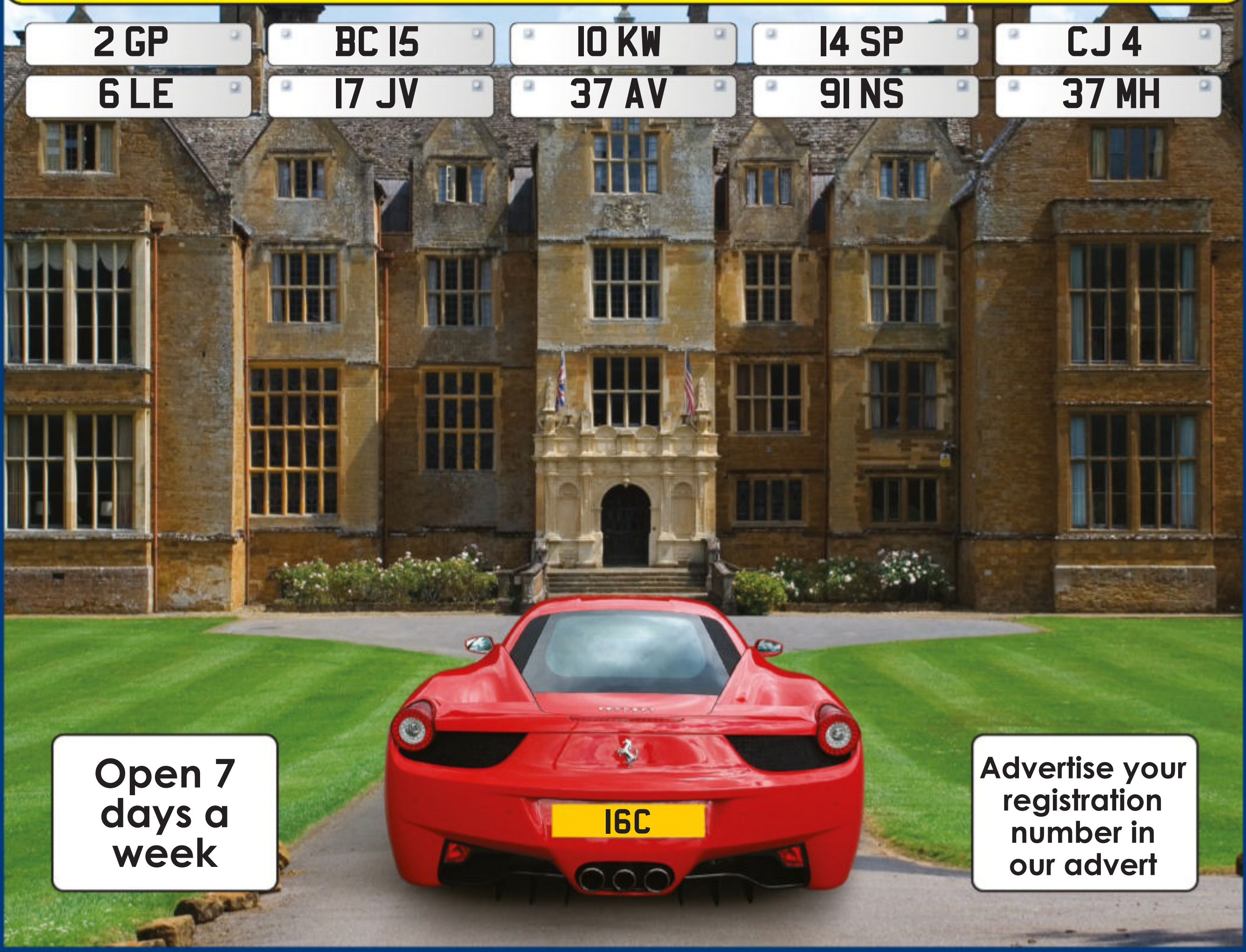
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Autocar's history of empirical road testing is the longest in the world. For more than a century, we have been verifying, scrutinising, describing and illustrating new cars in unparalleled detail. Driving impressions have always been a key part of this, around which the empirical tests have changed.

In pre-war years, we concerned ourselves with braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later our attention shifted to take in acceleration, top speed, stopping distance and cruising noise level.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated states of battery charge.

Our tests are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car – and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into that century of road testing with a subscription to the digital Autocar archive (visit themagazineshop.com/2025ED/ACA).

Matt Saunders, road test editor

STAR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Autocar star ratings aren't like those you may read elsewhere. We don't simply give the best car in any given class five stars, the worst one star and filter the rest in between.

Rather than thinking in entirely relative terms, we rank cars according to more abstract definitions of their performance, functionality and fitness for purpose, so that every particular verdict means something and has a degree of permanence.

We also penalise cars up to a star for what we consider particularly conspicuous and regressive failings concerning active safety systems or missing instrumentation or physical secondary controls.

☆ Hopeless, egregious. In some cases, potentially dangerous.
⯪ Appalling. An emphatic failure.
★ Very poor. Consistently flawed or seriously misconceived.
★⯪ Inadequate. Sub-standard in key areas.
★★ Mediocre. Acceptable at best.
★★⯪ Competent. Mostly average, with very few highlights.
★★★ Respectable. Consistently decent, with some strengths.
★★★⯪ Good. Well rounded and competitive in key areas.
★★★★ Very good. Sets some new class standards and misses few.
★★★★⯪ Excellent. Extends several key class standards.
★★★★★ Exceptional, unsurpassed. All but flawless.

ABARTH

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
500 Esseesse ★★★★☆ 25.3.09 Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.	7.6	6.5	1135	35.8	-
500e Turismo ★★★⯪☆ 9.8.23 A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.	6.9	6.4	1395	-	142
595 Competizione ★★★⯪☆ 26.2.14 Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.	7.5	6.4	1135	39.2	-

ALFA ROMEO

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Giulia Quadrifoglio ★★★★⯪ 29.3.17 Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.	4.5	3.2	1700	35.7	-
Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione ★★★⯪☆ 3.1.18 Likeable, if short of class's usual refinements.	6.8	7.0	1815	49.7	-
Stelvio Quadrifoglio ★★★⯪☆ 9.1.19 A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.	4.0	3.3	1931	31.9	-
Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD ★★★★☆ 28.6.23 Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.	5.7	5.3	1784	32.2	-

ALPINE

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A110 Première Edition ★★★★★ 16.5.18 Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.	4.7	3.8	1125	45.6	-
A110 Légende GT ★★★★⯪ 9.3.22 The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.	4.8	3.9	1140	40.2	-
A110 R ★★★⯪☆ 15.11.23 Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.	4.2	3.5	1094	39.7	-

ARIEL

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atom 4 ★★★★★ 9.10.19 Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.	3.2	2.4	680	39.2	-

ASTON MARTIN

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Vantage ★★★★⯪ 18.9.24 Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.	3.5	2.6	1745	28.5	-
DBS Superleggera ★★★★★ 21.11.18 Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.	3.7	2.7	1910	25.6	-
Vanquish ★★★★⯪ 26.3.25 Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT.	3.1	2.3	1951	25.8	-
DBX 707 ★★★★☆ 30.11.22 A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.	3.3	2.8	2278	26.2	-

AUDI

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition ★★★⯪☆ 2.10.19 Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.	7.9	8.4	1209	57.0	-
S3 Sportback ★★★⯪☆ 18.11.20 Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.	4.8	4.2	1552	39.0	-
RS4 Avant ★★★★☆ 14.2.18 A hot estate that oozes class but is curiously short on charisma.	4.0	3.5	1790	36.7	-
S5 Launch Edition ★★★★☆ 15.1.25 Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.	4.1	3.8	2027	33.7	-
A6 50 TFSIe Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 5.1.22 Hybrid tech boosts saloon's refinement, charm and running credentials.	5.7	5.2	2077	45.4	34
S6 E-tron Avant Launch Edition ★★★⯪☆ 16.4.25 Strong technical showing is undermined by price and lack of discernible character.	3.7	2.9	2346	2.8	256
RS6 Avant GT ★★★★☆ 5.2.25 Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.	3.2	2.7	2144	26.3	-
A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport ★★★⯪☆ 11.7.18 Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.	5.8	5.3	1880	53.1	-
A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport ★★★⯪☆ 17.6.20 Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be.	-	-	2330	-	-
E-tron 55 Quattro ★★★★⯪ 26.6.19 A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.	5.4	4.2	2569	-	218
E-tron S Quattro ★★★⯪☆ 2.6.21 A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.	4.2	3.6	2643	-	-
Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport ★★★⯪☆ 9.11.16 Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.	8.1	8.2	1316	-	-
SQ2 Quattro S Tronic ★★★★☆ 20.3.19 More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.	4.5	4.1	1530	34.5	-
Q4 E-tron 40 Sport ★★★⯪☆ 7.7.21 Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.	8.1	7.8	2112	-	-
Q5 TDI Quattro 204PS S Line ★★★⯪☆ 14.5.25 Pleasant and competitive but no particular step forward.	6.7	7.1	2072	42.6	-
Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1 ★★★⯪☆ 2.10.24 EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.	5.3	4.3	–	2.8	247
Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 12.8.15 Plush, suave and spacious but so-so to drive.	6.2	6.2	2245	-	-
SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro ★★★★⯪ 26.10.16 A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.	5.1	4.5	2330	37.9	-
Q8 50 TDI S Line ★★★★☆ 26.9.18 Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.	6.9	6.7	2285	40.1	-
R8 V10 Plus ★★★★☆ 30.12.15 Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.	3.1	2.6	1730	-	-
S E-tron GT ★★★★☆ 2.4.25 Audi's super-EV holds great appeal in its purest form but isn't at the bleeding edge.	3.1	2.4	2361	2.8	262

BENTLEY

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Bentayga W12 ★★★★⯪ 18.5.16 Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.	4.9	4.4	2440	-	-
Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline ★★★★☆ 24.4.24 Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.	4.4	3.8	2600	25.6	-
Continental GT Speed ★★★★☆ 22.12.21 Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.	3.4	2.7	2279	22.0	-
Continental GTC V8 S ★★★★⯪ 19.4.23 Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.	3.6	3.2	2295	29.1	-
Continental GT Speed Hybrid First Edition ★★★★☆ 16.4.25 Electrons make fastest GT quicker but not necessarily better.	3.1	2.5	2462	28.0	47
Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner ★★★★⯪ 17.8.22 Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.	4.4	3.9	2596	30.1	28

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Flying Spur Speed First Edition ★★★★☆	21.5.25	Hulking V8 hybrid powertrain broadens Spur's remit and skyrockets performance.	3.2	2.7	2750	26.7	44

BMW

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
120 M Sport ★★★½☆	31.12.24	Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.	7.3	6.8	1489	45.8	-
218i M Sport Gran Coupé ★★★☆☆	8.4.20	Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.	8.8	8.4	1375	58.2	-
220i M Sport Coupé ★★★★☆	1.6.22	A good coupé rather than a great sports car.	7.3	7.3	1546	46.8	-
M2 Coupé Manual ★★★★½	12.7.23	Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.	4.5	3.8	1687	32.1	-
320d M Sport Auto ★★★★★	15.5.19	BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.	6.9	6.8	1639	63.3	-
330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring ★★★★½	15.1.20	An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.	5.5	5.2	1922	52.6	-
330e M Sport ★★★★½	1.7.20	Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.	-	-	1740	-	-
M440i xDrive ★★★★☆	6.1.21	A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.	4.1	3.7	1775	44.0	-
M4 Competition ★★★★½	21.4.21	A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.	3.9	2.9	1800	32.7	-
M4 CS ★★★★☆	23.4.25	Stunning performance and pace comes with costs that aren't so easy to justify.	2.9	2.5	1747	32.4	-
i4 M50 ★★★★☆	19.1.22	Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.	4.1	3.2	2248	-	186
M4 CSL ★★★★☆	16.11.22	A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.	3.6	2.7	1625	31.1	-
M5 ★★★½☆	29.1.25	A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.	3.5	2.8	2373	27.3	35
i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro ★★★½☆	29.11.23	Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.	5.4	4.4	2213	-	235
550e xDrive M Sport Pro ★★★★☆	3.4.24	Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.	4.4	3.5	2232	40.1	47
i7 xDrive60 M Sport ★★★★½	15.2.23	It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.	4.5	3.4	2758	-	264
840d xDrive ★★★★☆	16.1.19	A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.	5.0	4.6	1901	49.2	-
M8 Competition Convertible ★★★½☆	5.2.20	Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.	3.3	2.7	2020	31.6	-
M8 Competition ★★★½☆	3.6.20	Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.	-	-	1960	-	-
X1 xDrive23i M Sport ★★★½☆	25.1.23	A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.	6.4	6.0	1800	45.6	-
X4 M Competition ★★★☆☆	13.11.19	Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.	4.0	3.3	2028	29.0	-
X5 xDrive30d M Sport ★★★★☆	2.1.19	Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.	6.6	6.6	2279	43.1	-
X6 M Competition ★★★☆☆	20.3.24	Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.	3.5	3.1	2442	29.3	-
X7 M60i xDrive ★★★★☆	29.3.23	Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.	4.2	3.7	2600	28.9	-
iX xDrive50 M Sport ★★★★½	2.3.22	Takes the luxury EV to elevated heights, but its design is easy to criticise.	4.4	3.4	2593	-	252
Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack ★★★★☆	21.8.24	Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.	5.7	5.9	1561	36.9	-

BMW ALPINA

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
B3 GT Touring ★★★★½	15.1.25	Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.	3.3	2.7	1910	29.4	-
B8 Gran Coupé ★★★★☆	22.9.21	Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.	3.5	2.8	2100	-	-

BYD

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atto 3 Design ★★★☆☆	31.5.23	Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.	7.0	6.2	1787	-	201
Seal Design ★★★½☆	17.1.24	Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.	5.8	4.7	2116	-	279

CATERHAM

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Seven 160 ★★★★☆	20.11.13	Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.	8.4	8.7	510	44.8	-
Seven 620S ★★★★½	9.3.16	Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.	3.8	4.2	650	29.5	-
Seven 420 Cup ★★★★½	31.8.22	Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.	4.2	3.4	560	35.3	-

CHEVROLET

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corvette 3LT ★★★★☆	22.6.22	Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.	3.9	3.2	1679	32.9	-
Corvette Z06 3LZ ★★★★☆	16.8.23	Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.	3.1	2.4	1670	26.1	-

CITROEN

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ami Colour ★★½☆☆	11.1.23	Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.	-	-	471	-	39
ë-C3 Max ★★★½☆	30.4.25	Predictable limitations but also plenty of usability, space and cheer for the money.	10.7	10.3	1479	2.8	-
C3 Aircross Puretech 110 Flair ★★★½☆	7.3.18	Practical small crossover isn't outstanding to drive but is likeable nonetheless.	11.5	10.7	1159	39.5	-
C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto ★★★☆☆	26.5.21	Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.	9.5	9.2	1320	56.4	-
ë-C4 X Shine ★★★½☆	3.5.23	EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.	9.7	8.8	1623	-	162
C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus ★★★½☆	13.2.19	Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.	9.0	8.5	1540	47.8	-
C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus ★★★★☆	28.9.22	Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.	7.8	7.1	1502	47.8	-

CUPRA

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Born 204PS 58kWh V3 ★★★½☆	6.7.22	As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.	6.7	6.2	1794	-	220
Born VZ First Edition ★★★★☆	9.10.24	An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.	5.4	4.2	1996	3.5	269
Leon Estate 310PS VZ3 ★★★★☆	8.9.21	Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.	4.9	4.3	1707	40.1	-
Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2 ★★★★☆	27.7.22	Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.	5.9	4.7	1468	43.4	-
Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG ★★★½☆	23.1.19	Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.	4.9	4.4	1615	36.7	-
Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG ★★★★½	3.2.21	Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.	5.1	4.3	1583	36.4	-
Tavascan V1 ★★★☆☆	5.2.25	Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.	6.0	5.0	2129	3.2	246

DACIA

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige ★★★★☆	28.4.21	Cut-price crossover is compromised in surprisingly few areas.	11.9	11.9	1096	54.1	-
Duster Hybrid 140 Journey ★★★★½	27.11.24	Notably improved yet barely any pricier.	9.7	8.7	1413	40.2	-
Jogger TCe 110 Comfort ★★★★½	20.4.22	Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.	11.0	11.0	1267	48.5	-

DS

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige ★★★☆☆	10.7.19	No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.	8.8	8.3	1205	48.6	-
4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+ ★★★½☆	29.6.22	High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.	7.4	6.0	1706	44.7	26
7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige ★★★½☆	19.9.18	DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.	8.6	7.0	1616	44.6	-
7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première ★★★½☆	26.4.23	More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.	5.7	4.6	1956	36.6	29
9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus ★★★½☆	2.2.22	Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.	8.6	7.1	1886	44.7	20

FERRARI

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
296 GTB ★★★★★	21.12.22	Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.	2.7	1.9	1648	37.8	15
SF90 Stradale ★★★★☆	3.11.21	Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.	2.5	1.8	1698	24.4	16

FIAT

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
500 Twinair Lounge ★★★½☆	24.11.10	Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.	11.7	13.0	1070	42.1	-
500C 1.2 Pop ★★★★☆	5.8.09	Landaulet hits the spot every bit as well as the regular hatchback and is often better.	13.2	14.4	1035	48.3	-
500e 42kWh Icon ★★★★☆	26.1.22	More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.	8.1	7.7	1365	-	142
600e La Prima ★★★½☆	27.3.24	Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.	8.8	7.7	1587	-	173

FORD

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X ★★★★½	20.2.19	Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.	8.9	7.8	1417	43.8	-

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Focus ST	★★★★☆	11.9.19	Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.	6.1	4.9	1433	40.7	-
Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium	★★★★⯪	25.3.20	The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.	10.0	9.6	1260	50.0	-
Puma Gen-E Select	★★★★☆	4.6.25	Ford finally brings engagement to the small EV class.	7.2	7.2	–	–	179
Puma ST	★★★★☆	24.3.21	Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.	7.2	6.2	1301	41.5	-
Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD	★★★⯪☆	23.10.24	Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.	5.8	4.8	2067	2.9	262
Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line	★★★⯪☆	24.6.20	Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.	-	-	1844	-	-
Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD	★★★★☆	23.6.21	Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.	6.8	5.6	2130	-	-
Mustang Mach-E GT AWD	★★★☆☆	27.4.22	Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.	4.2	3.5	2298	-	-
Mustang Dark Horse	★★★⯪☆	20.11.24	Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.	4.5	3.5	1853	26.1	-
Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium	★★★⯪☆	10.7.24	Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.	10.8	10.6	1426	47.4	-
Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited	★★★★☆	8.5.24	Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.	12.1	11.8	1971	38.8	-
Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak	★★★★⯪	14.6.23	Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.	9.8	9.9	2348	36.6	-
F-150 Lightning Platinum	★★★⯪☆	17.5.23	Electric truck has huge utility and appealing range, but its size and price will put many off.	4.5	3.7	3121	-	288

GENESIS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line	★★★⯪☆	10.11.21	Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.	7.2	6.7	1751	60.4	-
Electrified G80	★★★⯪☆	12.10.22	Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.	4.4	4.0	2349	-	272
GV60 Sport Plus	★★★★☆	24.8.22	Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.	3.8	3.1	2192	-	220
GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater	★★★⯪☆	15.9.21	Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.	6.7	6.6	2217	45.0	-

GWM

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ora Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition	★★⯪☆☆	1.2.23	Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.	7.7	7.2	1580	-	154

HONDA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
E Advance	★★★⯪☆	26.8.20	More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.	7.9	-	1535	-	110
Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX	★★★⯪☆	7.10.20	Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.	9.6	10.0	1248	57.0	-
Civic Type R GT	★★★★⯪	25.10.17	Hot hatch is a sheer delight for enthusiast drivers and their bank balances.	5.7	7.1	1400	57.0	-
HR-V e:HEV Advance Style	★★★⯪☆	24.11.21	Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.	9.2	9.3	1397	43.2	-
e:Ny1 Advance	★★★☆☆	1.11.23	EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.	8.6	6.9	1756	-	211

HYUNDAI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
i10 1.2 MPi Premium	★★★★☆	15.4.20	Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.	12.3	12.9	999	52.5	-
i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect	★★★⯪☆	24.2.21	Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.	9.7	10.1	1065	63.5	-
i20 N	★★★★⯪	25.8.21	N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.	6.1	5.4	1231	50.6	-
i30 Tourer 1.4 T-GDi Premium SE	★★★⯪☆	13.9.17	Competent, servile, inoffensive-looking family estate offers little to like or dislike.	9.5	9.7	1425	48.9	-
i30 N Performance	★★★⯪☆	28.12.17	Hyundai's first hot hatch attempt is fast and full-blooded with rough edges.	6.4	5.6	1478	43.1	-
Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate	★★★⯪☆	7.6.23	Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.	7.2	6.2	2006	-	272
Kona 1.0 120PS Advance	★★★★☆	6.9.23	Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.	10.4	10.3	1352	50.4	-
Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium	★★★★☆	17.3.21	Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.	7.6	6.2	1612	47.7	-
Ioniq 5 N	★★★★★	7.8.24	A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.	3.5	2.7	2221	-	224
Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium	★★★★☆	16.10.24	A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.	7.9	7.5	2007	32.9	-
Nexo	★★★⯪☆	12.6.19	Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.	9.6	9.7	1852	-	-

INEOS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster	★★★⯪☆	20.9.23	Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.	8.0	8.1	2682	20.9	-

JAECOO

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
7 SHS 2WD Luxury	★★⯪☆☆	9.4.25	Chinese PHEV SUV is efficient and keenly priced but has too many usability flaws.	7.3	6.4	1814	35.0	41

JAGUAR

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
XE 2.0 200PS R-Sport	★★★★⯪	1.7.15	Junior saloon hits the spot, matching the best of its German rivals at their own game.	7.6	6.7	1530	48.7	-
XF Sportbrake 300PS R-Sport AWD	★★★⯪☆	17.4.19	Estate is built on enthusiast values but in need of a wider update.	6.6	6.2	1727	36.8	-
E-Pace D180 AWD SE	★★★⯪☆	11.4.18	Misses the mark for keen drivers but is a desirable SUV nevertheless.	9.9	10.5	1768	49.2	-
I-Pace EV400 S	★★★★⯪	12.9.18	Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.	4.5	3.5	2236	-	-
F-Pace SVR	★★★★⯪	24.7.19	Broad-batted and can vividly thrill but hasn't forgotten its SUV roots.	4.1	3.5	2070	29.4	-
F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★⯪	1.12.21	Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.	5.1	4.6	2264	-	24
F-Type P575 R AWD Coupé	★★★★☆	29.4.20	The same likeable bruiser behind those prettier features.	-	-	1743	-	-

JEEP

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Avenger Electric Summit	★★★⯪☆	24.1.24	Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.	8.3	6.9	1601	-	172
Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited	★★★⯪☆	3.10.18	Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.	11.0	11.5	1540	44.8	-
Compass 4xe S	★★★☆☆	16.2.22	Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.	6.4	5.7	1872	46.9	22
Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited	★★★⯪☆	28.10.15	Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.	10.8	11.2	1502	52.6	-
Renegade 4xe Trailhawk	★★★☆☆	30.6.21	Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.	6.7	5.6	1816	39.4	21
Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland	★★★★☆	10.4.19	Off-road icon is now more competent on it.	9.0	9.1	2122	37.6	-

KGM

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Tivoli XLV ELX Auto	★★★☆☆	14.9.16	Practical, well-priced crossover is competent but far from compelling.	12.0	12.6	1469	-	-
Torres 1.5T K40 AWD	★★⯪☆☆	4.6.25	Cheerful enough, although not as cheap or capable as we had hoped.	11.3	12.0	1661	35.0	-

KIA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Picanto 1.0 MPI 2	★★★⯪☆	11.9.24	No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.	13.4	13.9	985	51.4	-
Ceed 1.6 CRDi 115bhp 2	★★★★☆	29.8.18	Big step up in the family hatchback class is a watershed moment for Kia.	9.9	9.6	1411	70.3	-

TOP 3

BEST FIRST CARS

1 Volkswagen Up

2 Seat Ibiza

3 Ford Fiesta

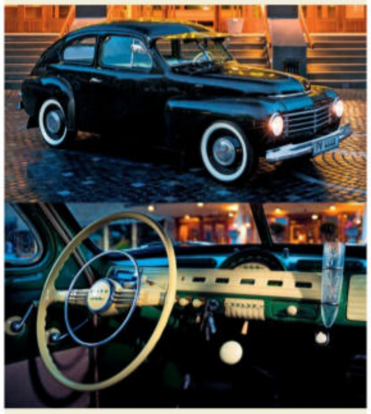
SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Road tests revisited

1999 SUBARU LEGACY 2.5 GX

Third generation of Impreza's bigger sibling has same boxer engine and AWD system but is set up to play like a rear-driver. "Arguably the best compact saloon to drive and quite possibly to own. A brilliant new BMW 3 Series rival."

Price £19,786
Engine 4 cyls horizontally opposed, 2457cc, petrol
Power 154bhp at 5600rpm
Torque 165lb ft at 3600rpm
Weight 1386kg
0-60mph 8.1sec
0-100mph 23.6sec
Top speed 128mph
Economy 25.7mpg



1954 VOLVO 444

Our first Volvo road test comes a decade after this saloon's launch. "It provides very good performance, has modest thirst and provides very comfortable transport for four. It is very satisfying to drive and covers ground in a very willing way."

Price £748 (in Netherlands; not sold in UK)
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1414cc, petrol
Power 44bhp at 4000rpm
Torque 67lb ft at 2200rpm
Weight 1139kg
0-30mph 6.9sec
0-60mph 29.6sec
Top speed 78mph
Economy 28.0mpg

READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE*

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Proceed 1.4 T-GDi GT-Line S ★★★½☆ 27.2.19 Alluring and interesting but not quite as special to drive as it looks.	9.5	8.9	1475	42.6	-
Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition ★★★½☆ 20.11.19 Looks good and drives well yet lacks some practicality and polish.	9.3	8.7	1452	46.8	-
Soul EV Urban ★★★½☆ 5.7.23 Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.	8.0	8.3	1569	-	147
Niro EV 3 ★★★★☆ 7.9.22 A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.	6.9	5.6	1739	-	246
EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line ★★★★☆ 31.12.24 New-era Niro is rationally compelling although it's not a game-changer.	7.2	6.4	1858	2.6	265
Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S ★★★½☆ 15.6.22 Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive.	7.3	6.4	1658	44.8	-
EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S ★★★★☆ 9.10.24 Not the outstanding EV it once was yet still a likeably bold choice.	7.5	6.3	–	2.9	227
EV6 GT ★★★½☆ 4.10.23 Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.	3.6	2.7	2161	-	209
Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2 ★★★½☆ 20.1.21 Lacks polish, although its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.	8.5	7.9	2006	43.3	-
EV9 GT-Line S ★★★★☆ 31.1.24 Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.	5.1	4.6	2660	-	220
LAMBORGHINI					
Huracán Performante ★★★★½ 11.10.17 Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.	2.9	2.0	1590	22.4	-
Huracán Evo RWD ★★★★½ 20.5.20 Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.	-	-	1389	-	-
Revuelto ★★★★½ 4.12.24 New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.	2.5	1.7	1960	24.1	6
Urus ★★★★☆ 3.7.19 Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind.	3.3	2.8	2285	28.5	-
LAND ROVER					
Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE ★★★★½ 10.2.21 A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.	6.8	5.9	2158	32.7	24
Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE ★★★★☆ 8.1.20 Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.	10.3	10.5	2145	47.5	-
Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury ★★★★½ 12.4.17 A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.	8.7	8.8	2230	-	-
Range Rover Velar D240 HSE ★★★½☆ 30.8.17 Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.	9.3	9.0	2089	48.2	-
Defender 110 P400 X ★★★★½ 13.5.20 World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.	-	-	2388	-	-
Defender 110 P635 Octa Edition 1 ★★★★½ 30.4.25 Outrageous, unnecessary and totally awe-inspiring.	4.6	3.7	2717	22.1	-
Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE ★★★★½ 2.11.22 Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.	7.2	6.6	2511	42.5	-
Range Rover Sport SV Edition One ★★★½☆ 28.8.24 More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.	3.9	5.1	2546	28.9	-
Range Rover D350 HSE ★★★★½ 13.7.22 A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.	6.3	6.0	2667	35.9	-
Range Rover P550e Autobiography ★★★★☆ 9.4.25 A unique and enthralling character that brings added refinement in PHEV form.	4.9	4.0	2979	26.6	44
LEXUS					
LBX FWD Premium Plus Design ★★★½☆ 29.5.24 Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.	8.4	8.4	1306	45.2	-
NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack ★★★★☆ 16.3.22 Interesting, refined and efficient, although not as polished as the best.	7.1	6.7	1812	44.7	-
RX 500h F Sport ★★★½☆ 22.3.23 Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.	6.1	5.5	2088	31.7	-
ES 300h Takumi ★★★½☆ 6.2.19 Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.	8.7	7.6	1742	48.8	-
RC F Ultimate Edition ★★★½☆ 6.11.24 Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.	4.7	3.8	1733	30.1	-
LM 350h AWD Takumi ★★★☆☆ 7.2.24 MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.	8.6	8.2	2368	40.5	-
LOTUS					
Emira V6 First Edition ★★★★½ 2.4.25 The British sports car is alive, well and expensive.	4.4	4.0	1493	29.0	–
Emeya 600 GT ★★★★☆ 28.5.25 A good electric saloon and a good Lotus.	4.1	2.8	2478	2.4	218
Eletre R ★★★½☆ 24.7.24 There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.	3.1	2.2	2682	-	216
MASERATI					
Ghibli Diesel ★★★½☆ 12.3.14 Saloon isn't lacking in style but is a little short on substance.	6.5	6.0	2040	40.4	-
Grecale Trofeo ★★★½☆ 18.10.23 A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.	3.6	3.2	2097	33.6	-
Levante Diesel ★★★☆☆ 30.11.16 A mildly interesting also-ran, with a weak engine and so-so handling.	6.8	6.9	2205	41.5	-
Levante S Granlusso ★★★½☆ 8.5.19 Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it.	5.1	4.5	2232	23.7	-
Granturismo Trofeo ★★★½☆ 11.9.24 An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.	3.6	3.1	-	33.0	-
Granturismo Folgore ★★★½☆ 26.2.25 Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.	2.9	2.3	2358	2.3	183
MC20 Cielo ★★★★☆ 16.10.24 Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.	4.0	2.8	1783	29.6	-
MAZDA					
2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav ★★★★☆ 22.4.15 The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.	10.4	11.0	1050	-	-
3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport ★★★★☆ 6.11.19 Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.	9.1	9.1	1425	57.0	-
MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech ★★★½☆ 10.3.21 Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.	9.1	8.6	1663	-	-
CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line ★★★★☆ 19.2.25 Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.	7.6	7.6	1422	45.2	-
CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav ★★★★☆ 28.6.17 Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.	9.4	9.2	1620	53.9	-
CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line ★★★½☆ 10.5.23 Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.	7.6	7.2	1893	52.3	-
MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav ★★★★½ 2.9.15 An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.	8.4	7.9	1050	-	-
McLAREN					
720S ★★★★★ 24.5.17 Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.	2.9	2.0	1419	24.2	-

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*For three weeks from publication date

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
750S	★★★★☆	19.6.24	McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.	2.9	2.0	1412	28.8	-
Artura	★★★★⯪	19.10.22	Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.	3.2	2.1	1552	32.9	17
Artura Spider	★★★★⯪	6.11.24	Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.	3.1	2.2	1618	27.2	17
GT	★★★⯪☆	27.1.21	Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.	3.3	2.3	1580	34.2	
MERCEDES-AMG								
A45 S 4Matic+ Plus	★★★★⯪	4.3.20	AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.	4.1	3.3	1661	41.5	-
C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate	★★★☆☆	31.7.24	Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.	3.3	2.8	2217	27.1	7.1
GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé	★★★★⯪	13.3.19	AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.	3.3	2.7	2135	30.1	-
GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé	★★★⯪☆	21.6.23	Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.	2.9	2.5	2339	23.9	6
EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition	★★★★☆	8.6.22	Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.	3.6	2.8	2673	-	259
S63 E Performance Night Edition	★★★★☆	2.10.24	Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.	3.5	2.7	2666	26.1	-
GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	14.10.20	Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.	5.4	4.9	2471	29.4	-
SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	26.7.23	Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.	3.5	2.8	1939	26.2	-
GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé	★★★⯪☆	14.8.24	Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.	3.1	2.7	1972	30.7	-
MERCEDES-BENZ								
A200 AMG Line Executive	★★★★☆	24.5.23	Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.	7.8	7.3	1396	59.3	-
A250e AMG Line Premium	★★★☆☆	5.8.20	Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.	6.7	5.4	1665	57.8	-
B180 Sport	★★★★☆	3.4.19	In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.	8.4	8.3	1405	51.3	-
CLA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	21.8.19	Nearer the mark to look at but still way wide of it as a driver's car.	6.8	6.1	1555	48.3	-
C300e AMG Line	★★★★⯪	4.5.22	Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.	5.8	5.1	2005	49.0	48
E220d AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	3.1.24	An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.	7.2	5.9	1917	65.8	-
E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus	★★★★⯪	19.3.25	Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need.	4.9	4.3	2167	46.1	-
EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	4.1.23	Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.	6.0	5.5	2386	-	262
EQS 450+ Business Class	★★★★☆	7.5.25	Progress has been made, but this limousine still isn't quite the ultimate luxury EV.	5.9	4.9	2608	2.6	248
EQS 450 Business Class SUV	★★★⯪☆	6.3.24	Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.	5.5	5.2	2899	-	265
S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive	★★★★⯪	6.4.22	Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.	5.2	4.2	2530	37.0	45
EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★☆☆	17.11.21	Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.	8.4	7.6	2030	-	200
GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★⯪☆	16.9.20	Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.	7.4	7.1	1810	55.4	-
EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★⯪☆	18.5.22	A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.	7.7	6.8	2235	-	-
GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★⯪☆	13.9.23	Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.	6.5	6.0	1929	41.2	-
GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium	★★★⯪☆	12.2.20	Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.	6.5	6.0	2634	38.2	-
G350d AMG Line	★★★★☆	17.7.19	Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.	7.5	7.2	2451	31.3	-
G500 AMG Line Premium Plus	★★★★☆	25.9.24	Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.	5.1	4.5	–	30.7	-
CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.	6.1	5.5	2122	37.1	49
MG								
3 Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★⯪☆	12.6.24	Good value and with no serious vices but still lacks a final layer of polish.	6.8	6.2	1311	47.9	-
4 EV Long Range SE	★★★★☆	5.4.23	Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.	7.1	6.1	1692	-	185
5 SW EV Exclusive	★★★⯪☆	25.11.20	MG's second EV does cheap motoring much better than the first.	8.0	7.1	1538	-	161
ZS Hybrid+ Trophy	★★★☆☆	22.1.25	Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.	7.6	6.6	1422	41.5	–
MINI								
John Cooper Works	★★★★☆	14.5.25	A proper hot hatch let down by a stiff ride and an impenetrable user interface.	5.8	4.5	1363	42.0	-
Countryman C Exclusive	★★★⯪☆	17.4.24	Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.	8.7	7.7	1618	46.9	-
Aceman SE Exclusive	★★★⯪☆	8.1.25	Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.	6.8	5.7	1756	3.1	162
MORGAN								
Plus Four	★★★⯪☆	12.8.20	Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.	5.1	4.3	1013	54.0	-
Plus Six	★★★★☆	10.4.24	The individualist's sports car made better.	4.4	3.3	1188	37.2	-
Super 3	★★★★⯪	9.11.22	Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.	6.9	5.9	644	43.5	-
NISSAN								
Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna	★★★⯪☆	29.1.20	Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.	11.9	11.8	1256	46.0	-
Qashqai 1.3 DIG-T 158 Tekna	★★★★☆	28.7.21	Ticks the important family car boxes but its powertrain frustrates.	10.0	9.3	1412	44.9	-
Ariya 87kWh Evolve	★★★⯪☆	26.10.22	Surprisingly traditional and luxurious although not wholly successful.	8.2	6.4	2109	-	-
X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna	★★★★☆	22.2.23	Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.	6.6	6.0	1947	33.8	-
OMODA								
5 1.6 TGDI Comfort	★★⯪☆☆	20.11.24	Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.	7.4	6.3	1474	38.2	-
PEUGEOT								
e-208 Allure Premium	★★★★☆	6.5.20	Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV	-	-	1455	38.2	-
308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT	★★★★☆	25.5.22	A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.	9.5	9.2	1358	55.3	-
408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8	★★★★☆	11.10.23	Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.	8.2	7.3	1746	42.1	40
508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto	★★★★☆	24.10.18	Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.	8.8	8.5	1671	52.0	-
508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8	★★★★☆	8.7.20	This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.	-	-	1720	-	-
508 SW Hybrid4 PSE	★★★★☆	5.5.21	Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.	5.7	4.7	1892	44.0	-

TOP 3

BEST 4X4s

1 Land Rover Defender

2 Jeep Wrangler

3 Toyota Land Cruiser

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
e-2008 GT Line	★★★½☆	30.9.20	Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.	9.5	8.9	1638	-	-
3008 1.6 BlueHDi 120 GT Line	★★★½☆	18.1.17	In challenging company, the 3008 promises more than it delivers.	12.0	12.1	1300	53.2	-
e-3008 73kWh Allure	★★★½☆	4.8.24	Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.	8.5	7.1	2132	-	219
5008 Hybrid 136 GT	★★★☆☆	12.2.25	Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.	9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	–

POLESTAR

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 BST Edition 270	★★★½☆	12.4.23	A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.	4.5	3.4	2161	-	188
3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition	★★★★☆	12.2.25	Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.	4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235

PORSCHE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
718 Boxster	★★★★½	8.6.16	Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.	5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-
718 Cayman S	★★★★½	10.8.16	Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.	4.8	3.9	1430	-	-
718 Spyder	★★★★½	1.4.20	Spyder's flat six rectifies most, if not quite all, of the 718's shortcomings.	4.3	3.5	1350	30.1	-
718 Cayman GT4 RS	★★★★★	14.9.22	A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.	3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-
911 GT3 PDK	★★★★½	11.8.21	Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.	3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-
911 Turbo S	★★★★½	10.8.22	Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.	2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-
911 Carrera T	★★★★☆	30.8.23	Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.	4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-
911 GT3 RS	★★★★½	22.11.23	Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.	3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-
911 Dakar	★★★★☆	10.1.24	Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.	3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-
911 S/T	★★★★★	3.7.24	Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.	3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-
911 Carrera GTS	★★★★½	5.3.25	Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.	2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-
Macan Turbo	★★★★½	4.6.14	Luxury SUV meets sports car in a compact, well-priced package.	4.7	4.3	2050	30.9	-
Macan Turbo Electric	★★★½☆	19.2.25	Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.	3.0	2.5	–	2.1	219
Cayenne S	★★★★½	21.2.24	Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.	5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-
Cayenne Turbo	★★★★☆	5.9.18	As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.	3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-
Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid	★★★½☆	27.5.20	Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.	-	-	2490	-	-
Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé	★★★★☆	20.7.22	Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one.	3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-
Panamera 4 E-Hybrid	★★★★☆	22.1.25	Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.	3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29
Taycan Turbo S	★★★★½	30.10.24	Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.	2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233

TOP 3

BEST PORSCHES

1 Porsche 718 Spyder RS

2 Porsche 911 Carrera T

3 Porsche Cayenne S

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

RENAULT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Clio TCe 100 Iconic	★★★★½	27.11.19	Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.	11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-
5 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic Five	★★★★½	12.3.25	Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.	7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166
Megane E-Tech Techno	★★★½☆	23.11.22	Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.	6.9	5.4	1688	-	198
Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC	★★★½☆	18.3.20	Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.	9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-
Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition	★★★½☆	13.10.21	Eminently sensible but unspectacular.	11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-
Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range	★★★★☆	26.6.24	The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.	8.1	6.3	1916	-	313
Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine	★★★½☆	19.7.23	Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.	8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-

ROLLS-ROYCE

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghost	★★★★½	13.1.21	Most technologically advanced Rolls-Royce is an exceptional limo.	4.7	3.8	2490	28.5	-
Phantom	★★★★★	4.4.18	The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.	5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-
Spectre	★★★★½	20.12.23	Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.	4.1	3.1	2935	-	245
Cullinan Black Badge	★★★★☆	19.2.20	Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.	4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-

SEAT

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★½	19.7.17	Grown-up supermini shows its rivals how it's done – in most respects.	10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-
Leon eHybrid FR	★★★½☆	2.12.20	Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.	7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26
Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★☆	15.11.17	Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.	10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-
Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG	★★★☆☆	25.10.23	Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.	8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-

SKODA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort	★★★★½	9.2.22	Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.	9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-
Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG	★★★½☆	31.7.19	Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.	7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-
Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG	★★★★☆	2.9.20	Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.	8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-
Octavia Estate vRS	★★★★☆	29.1.25	A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.	5.9	4.8	–	37.6	-
Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate	★★★★★	17.7.24	The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.	8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-
Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout	★★★½☆	30.1.19	Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.	8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-
Elroq 85 Edition	★★★★½	19.3.25	Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV.	6.1	5.0	2085	3.5	246
Enyaq iV 80 Lounge	★★★★☆	18.8.21	Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.	8.3	7.8	2098	-	262

SMART

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
#1 Premium	★★★½☆	8.11.23	Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.	5.6	4.6	1861	-	229
#3 Premium	★★★½☆	15.5.24	Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.	5.7	4.9	1832	-	205

SUBARU

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring	★★★½☆	28.2.24	Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.	10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-
Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring	★★★½☆	27.9.23	A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked.	9.3	8.7	1690	42.8	-
Solterra AWD Touring	★★★☆☆	15.3.23	A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough.	6.7	6.2	2051	-	169

SUZUKI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT	★★★★½	7.4.21	Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around.	6.4	5.8	1966	44.4	48

TESLA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Standard Range Plus	★★★★☆	4.9.19	Wrinkles aside, it offers great electric performance and usability at this price.	5.8	4.7	1633	-	156

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Long Range ★★★★☆	14.2.24	Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.	4.4	3.4	1846	-	277
Model Y Long Range AWD ★★★★☆	23.3.22	A far better electric car than a premium SUV.	4.7	3.6	1978	-	234
Model S P90D ★★★★⯪	20.4.16	Great EV, intriguing driver's car. Not quite the perfect luxury GT.	3.5	3.0	2220	-	214
Model S Plaid ★★★⯪☆	2.8.23	Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.	2.4	1.7	2220	-	301
Model X 90D ★★★★☆	15.2.17	High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.	5.2	4.2	2508	-	147

TOYOTA

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Aygo X Limited Edition ★★★⯪☆	11.5.22	A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.	15.6	16.5	974	58.7	-
Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design ★★★★☆	23.9.20	Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.	9.2	8.8	1140	65.0	-
GR Yaris Circuit Pack ★★★★★	3.3.21	Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.	5.2	5.0	1283	39.2	-
Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports ★★★★☆	5.6.19	A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.	8.5	7.7	1537	52.6	-
Prius Plug-in Design ★★★★☆	23.4.25	Better late than never for best Prius to date.	6.6	5.6	1542	56.1	46
bZ4X AWD Vision ★★★⯪☆	18.1.23	A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.	6.4	5.9	2023	-	208
Land Cruiser 2.8 D-4D 204 Invincible ★★★★☆	21.5.25	Remains supremely tough but now has added kerb appeal and drivability.	10.3	10.3	2503	30.7	-
Mirai Design Premium ★★★★☆	16.6.21	Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.	8.7	8.3	1937	-	-
GR Supra Pro ★★★★☆	14.8.19	Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.	4.4	3.6	1495	39.0	-
Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport ★★★⯪☆	1.3.23	Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.	10.0	9.5	2241	32.5	-

VAUXHALL

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto ★★★⯪☆	22.1.20	Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.	11.2	11.5	1171	51.8	-
Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line ★★★⯪☆	5.10.22	Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.	9.9	9.2	1304	55.3	-
Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite ★★★☆☆	7.6.17	Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.	9.8	10.3	1278	54.2	-
Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto ★★★⯪☆	12.5.21	The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.	9.3	9.1	1238	48.6	-
Grandland X Hybrid4 Ultimate Nav ★★★☆☆	22.4.20	Inspires big expectations and delivers few, but it's an interesting fleet option.	-	-	1800	-	-
Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy ★★★⯪☆	27.12.18	Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.	14.7	16.2	1552	60.1	-

VOLKSWAGEN

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE ★★★★⯪	31.1.18	Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.	10.7	11.2	1145	57.1	-
Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+ ★★★★☆	1.8.18	A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.	6.7	5.9	1342	46.8	-
Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG ★★★★⯪	22.7.20	Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.	8.3	7.8	1330	60.0	-
Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style ★★★★⯪	23.10.24	New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.	7.2	6.1	1619	46.5	-
Golf GTI ★★★⯪☆	25.9.24	'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.	5.3	4.4	–	47.2	-
Golf R ★★★★☆	14.4.21	Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price.	4.4	3.7	1520	43.9	-
ID 3 Pro Performance Life ★★★★☆	31.3.21	Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.	7.0	6.5	1757	-	145
Arteon 2.0 BiTDI 240PS 4Motion R-Line ★★★⯪☆	27.9.17	Considered approach produces an executive flagship short on sparkle.	6.5	6.2	1866	55.6	-
Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake ★★★⯪☆	9.6.21	Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.	7.1	6.0	1783	52.5	-
ID 7 Pro Match ★★★★⯪	13.3.24	Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.	6.1	5.1	2162	-	239
T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG ★★★★⯪	24.1.18	Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.	6.7	6.5	1534	37.5	-
T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG ★★⯪☆☆	10.6.20	It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.	-	-	1540	-	-
Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line ★★★⯪☆	22.5.24	Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.	9.4	9.2	1606	44.9	-
ID 4 GTX Max ★★★⯪☆	27.10.21	GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.	6.2	5.6	2220	-	200
Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech ★★★⯪☆	8.8.18	An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.	7.2	6.6	2292	41.6	-
Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance ★★★⯪☆	5.6.24	It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.	6.2	5.7	2446	34.1	26
Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG ★★★★☆	3.2.16	A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one.	9.9	9.7	1666	-	-
Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style ★★★★☆	8.3.23	Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.	8.4	7.1	2243	37.9	14
ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro ★★★★☆	8.2.23	It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.	9.5	9.1	2498	-	185
Grand California 600 ★★★⯪☆	2.1.20	Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.	15.8	16.7	3095	28.5	-
Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB ★★★☆☆	30.3.22	Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.	9.1	9.0	2108	39.1	-
Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance ★★★★☆	13.11.24	Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sibling car.	7.2	6.4	1836	44.5	73

VOLVO

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus ★★★☆☆	1.5.24	Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism.	5.7	5.1	1779	-	179
C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate ★★★⯪☆	13.4.22	A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.	4.4	3.6	2172	-	194
XC40 D4 AWD First Edition ★★★★⯪	7.2.18	Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger siblings, if not better.	8.5	8.5	1735	43.8	-
XC60 D4 AWD R-Design ★★★⯪☆	5.7.17	The right product at the right time but lacking the right dynamic finish.	8.9	8.9	1836	48.9	-
XC90 D5 AWD Momentum ★★★★☆	17.6.15	A very impressive all-rounder with its own distinctive appeal.	8.3	8.3	2076	-	-
V60 D4 Momentum Pro Auto ★★★★☆	27.6.18	Fine-looking, capable and practical estate with only a few demerits.	8.9	8.3	1669	43.1	-
V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design ★★★★⯪	21.9.22	Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.	4.9	4.3	2036	38.0	51
V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design ★★★★⯪	11.11.20	Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.	5.6	4.9	2109	41.9	-

XPENG

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G6 RWD Standard Range ★★★⯪☆	26.2.25	Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.	6.8	6.2	2067	3.3	208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

Lamborghini Temerario July
Huracán replacement gets a 4.0-litre V8 and three electric motors for a huge 907bhp.

Ford Mustang GTD Summer
The ultimate pony car has an 800bhp 5.2-litre V8 and will cost £315,000.

Aston Martin Vantage Volante Autumn
Convertible super-tourer could weigh two tonnes – but it has an 824bhp V12.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST

Why I love... GRILLES

BY STEVE CROPLEY

I think it was the Americans who started it. When I was a little kid, the Detroiters were heavily into indulging themselves with some of the most massive, chrome-laden, over-the-top front grilles in history, and I loved them all, even though I usually only saw them in pictures.

At the time, an elaborate grille usually went with a chest-high set of tin tailfins overhanging the bootlid of practically every full-sized American car (and quite a few British and mainland European offerings too), but I never cared as much about them as I did the grilles: they didn't have the same high purpose.

Distinctive frontal façades did two things for me – and still do. First, they did a perfect job of defining a car's make. A Chevy was very different from a Ford, despite equal ironmongery. Second, they spelled out the prevailing mood of the society from which they sprang. Back in the 'chrome grin' era, the pervading mood was optimism and anticipated prosperity: the end of war, a gradual freedom from austerity, the beginning of a baby boom, an increase in personal ambition and very little concern about economy or efficiency. Now it's very different.

I love the way that grilles have changed through the ages, keeping their role as a guide to the times. Compare the joyous exuberance of an early Cadillac Eldorado with the efficiency-driven restraint of 2020's Volkswagen ID 3, for example. It's amazing to me that while absorbing such seismic design shifts, grilles can still maintain a marque's historical connections.

Does any design element tie in heritage more than a grille? Just ask Jeep

Cheery grille of Eldorado reflected the optimism of the post-war years

> **"Grilles have kept changing, acting as a guide to the times"**

Today, I get special pleasure from the seven-slat grille of a Jeep Wrangler, re-expressed over many years by hundreds of designers intent on maintaining a connection to the ubiquitous wartime 1940s Jeep – whose original radiator shroud simply had a few casually cut vent slots.

I'm also intrigued by how the grille designer's challenge gets ever greater. Today's electric cars don't strictly need grilles at all, but car companies that want to be successful still see a vital need for them. Witness Jaguar's new Type 00 concept, which keeps a long nose and a carefully designed frontal facade, even though it doesn't strictly need either.

The fascination of the future will be seeing how things proceed, given that more and more car models crowd the world market. Great surfaces, harmonious shapes, ideal proportions and a perfect stance are all fine, but providing 2040's cars with distinctive faces looks like posing a whole new problem.

What we did this week

MAN OF THE CLOTH

I recently spent some time in a VW Golf eHybrid in Match trim – the second one from the bottom and the one I'd have. Along with a tasteful off-white paint scheme, it featured something I hadn't seen in years: cloth seats! They're much more comfortable than leather and they don't burn you after sitting in the summer sun.

JONATHAN BRYCE

NOT ON ANY SUNDAY

Can you call it a barn find if it comes from your own shed? I've just unearthed this Honda scrambler project that I need to finish. Yes, it only has two wheels, but the long-term plan I'll never achieve is to carry it camping on the back of a Land Rover. Back under the dust sheet it goes.

MATT PRIOR

DENIS, DENIS, I'M BEING CRUSHED ON YOU

There are no airs or graces around Dacia CEO Denis Le Vot. I interviewed him in the back of a Bigster, me tucked in the middle and him behind the driver, all in broadcast quality for Autocar's My Week in Cars podcast. Background noise is always a concern when recording audio yet the mild-hybrid Bigster suppressed it like an S-Class.

MARK TISSHAW

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D21 AAR	£675
AB 5933	£6500
A25 ABA	£675
G23 ABB	£675
Y6 ABC	£675
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B26 ERT	£1200
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A26 ESH	£875
F21 EST	£675
N6 ESW	£875
L9 ETH	£675
A23 ETH	£675
H25 ETT	£675
G26 EVA	£775
P7 EVE	£1600
A21 EVE	£1500
C21 EVE	£1400
J23 EVE	£675
K28 EVE	£675
G21 EVS	£675
B24 EVS	£675
K28 EVS	£675
A23 FAB	£675
F25 FAB	£675
P21 FAR	£675
A23 FAR	£675
D23 FAR	£675
C21 FAY	£875
F21 FAY	£1300
E34 FAY	£675
36 FAY	£5100
A87 FAY	£675
388 FBB	£875
FCE 86	£1900
N21 FEN	£675
C24 FEN	£675
H23 FER	£675
266 FFR	£775
E21 FFY	£675
7060 FG	£875
9571 FH	£1400
116 FHA	£675
FHE 829	£875
FIL 942	£1300
FIL 2171	£675
N1 FJB	£675
B24 FLY	£675
C24 FLY	£675
5887 FM	£1600
H3 FMB	£775
270 FME	£1100
FMZ 911	£1700
290 FOR	£1300
D21 FOS	£675
R22 FOX	£1600
A24 FOX	£1700
888 FPA	£675
FR 301	£4700
FR 9034	£1900
C21 FRD	£1300
G21 FRD	£675
C24 FRD	£675
D24 FRD	£675
T4 FRE	£675
G21 FRE	£675
C24 FRE	£675
FRW 975	£1300
C21 FRY	£675
D21 FRY	£675
FSR 47	£2700
FT 54	£8500
T19 FUN	£675
A26 FUN	£675
D26 FUN	£775
A23 GAB	£675
C24 GAB	£675
A21 GAH	£675
F14 GAL	£775
J18 GAL	£675
R44 GAL	£675
A26 GAM	£775
A21 GAN	£675
C26 GAN	£775
D26 GAN	£675
D11 GAP	£875
S14 GAP	£775
H14 GAR	£675
D21 GAR	£675
G21 GAR	£675
E23 GAR	£675
J24 GAR	£675
C21 GAV	£675
A22 GAV	£675
D22 GAV	£675
G23 GAV	£875
GAZ 344	£1300
GAZ 9141	£675
GBO 877	£675
J1 GBS	£2100
A21 GBS	£675
GC 3809	£2500
GEC 7	£4900
A22 GED	£675
J23 GEE	£875
K23 GEE	£675
C25 GEE	£1200
D25 GEE	£1300
E26 GEE	£975
G26 GEE	£1200
C8 GEF	£1100
P8 GEL	£1500
B24 GEL	£675
C26 GEM	£1300
J321 GEM	£775
B6 GEN	£675
H21 GEN	£675
G24 GEN	£675
D21 GEO	£675
J21 GEO	£675
D21 GER	£675
G21 GER	£1200
C24 GER	£1300
H26 GER	£1200
J55 GER	£675
A23 GGG	£675
GIB 471	£2500
GIL 430	£1300
GIL 6393	£675
L5 GJA	£875
A23 GJB	£675
G23 GJB	£675
D21 GJH	£675
A23 GJH	£675
GJI 570	£875
F21 GJM	£675
A24 GJM	£675
Y8 GJR	£675
A26 GJR	£675
E21 GJW	£675
A23 GJW	£675
GK 776	£5300
A23 GMB	£675
K18 GMC	£675
E6 GOR	£1500
E21 GOR	£675
A24 GOR	£675
A24 GOW	£675
GP 3090	£3100
A2 GPS	£675
J21 GRA	£975
A24 GRA	£1200
B25 GRN	£675
Y9 GRY	£775
GSU 180	£875
J8 GSW	£1100
GTP 608	£1300
E21 GTR	£875
A24 GTR	£675
G24 GTR	£675
L15 GUN	£875
N1 GUS	£3100
T23 GUS	£875
J11 GUY	£1200
B20 GUY	£1100
A22 GUY	£1200
K24 GUY	£775
X40 GUY	£975
N999 GUY	£675
A21 GYM	£675
A26 HAB	£675
C26 HAD	£875
A21 HAG	£675
C21 HAL	£675
D21 HAL	£675
E26 HAL	£675
A23 HAM	£975
E23 HAM	£675
H23 HAM	£775
C24 HAM	£675
G21 HAN	£1500
G22 HAR	£975
E24 HAR	£675
B25 HAR	£1300
J80 HAR	£875
C21 HAS	£675
R16 HAT	£675
G21 HAT	£675
D26 HAT	£675
D21 HAY	£875
K21 HAY	£675
C26 HAY	£875
HAZ 530	£675
250 HD	£5700
A26 HED	£675
B7 HEL	£1600
D23 HEM	£675
C26 HEM	£675
G11 HEN	£675
D25 HEN	£775
A26 HEP	£675
E25 HER	£675
H4 HES	£1300
X6 HES	£975
C21 HES	£675
J26 HES	£675
A23 HEV	£675
A23 HEW	£675
C24 HEW	£1100
HIL 380	£775
HIL 7454	£675
8679 HJ	£875
A21 HJB	£675
G21 HLL	£675
D25 HLL	£675
C26 HLL	£675
367 HLW	£875
V3 HMC	£1100
A26 HMC	£675
C21 HMS	£675
A25 HNT	£675
D26 HNT	£675
D21 HOB	£675
A24 HOB	£675
C9 HOC	£1500
C22 HOC	£675
A25 HOD	£675
H25 HOD	£675
S9 HOE	£1900
H21 HOG	£675
W20 HOL	£1200
A26 HOL	£1200
B26 HOL	£1300
E26 HOL	£1200
A21 HOP	£875
D21 HOP	£675
G21 HOP	£675
B26 HOP	£775
A21 HOW	£875
G21 HOW	£775
C25 HOW	£875
D25 HOW	£875
H25 HOW	£875
E26 HOW	£675
59 HP	£11500
29 HS	£14500
31 HT	£11000
HTK 954	£875
B21 HUD	£675
E21 HUD	£675
D24 HUD	£675
A26 HUD	£675
A24 HUG	£675
C24 HUG	£675
B26 HUG	£675
E26 HUG	£775
S18 HUL	£675
A21 HUM	£675
C21 HUM	£675
A25 HUN	£875
H5 HUT	£975
C23 HUT	£675
G23 HUT	£675
F26 HUT	£675
HVG 853	£875
59 HYR	£1900
IJI 843	£875
H2 JAB	£1500
H21 JAB	£675
D25 JAB	£675
A26 JAB	£875
C26 JAB	£675
M11 JAC	£2500
H21 JAC	£1500
D23 JAC	£1300
L7 JAD	£1400
T13 JAD	£675
D21 JAF	£675
G21 JAF	£675
C22 JAF	£675
E15 JAG	£1700
A24 JAG	£1200
X24 JAG	£2300
W27 JAG	£975
N99 JAG	£1100
W100 JAG	£875
H21 JAH	£675
N12 JAK	£1200
G19 JAK	£1400
D21 JAK	£1300
H21 JAK	£1300
A22 JAK	£1300
P23 JAK	£1300
M111 JAK	£1200
N111 JAK	£875
J123 JAK	£875
N4 JAL	£875
X9 JAL	£975
R21 JAL	£675
A25 JAL	£675
D26 JAL	£675
D22 JAM	£675
A26 JAM	£675
N9 JAN	£2900
C21 JAN	£1700
D21 JAN	£1800
G21 JAN	£1700
K30 JAN	£1500
B44 JAN	£1700
T66 JAN	£1700
B92 JAN	£1300
Y222 JAN	£975
P400 JAN	£875
B987 JAN	£675
A21 JAP	£875
C23 JAP	£675
R70 JAP	£675
K11 JAR	£675
P16 JAR	£675
A21 JAR	£975
C21 JAS	£1400
D21 JAS	£1400
A24 JAS	£1300
E80 JAS	£1100
C21 JAW	£675
D21 JAW	£875
D21 JAX	£675
H21 JAX	£675
A23 JAX	£675
C22 JAY	£1300
D23 JAY	£1400
G24 JAY	£1200
JAZ 390	£775
JB 1931	£3600
JB 3995	£3400
X11 JBC	£675
W2 JBM	£675
N8 JBR	£675
D21 JBS	£675
H5 JCA	£675
D21 JCB	£675
A23 JCB	£675
W1 JCC	£1400
A15 JCC	£675
N5 JCD	£875
A23 JCD	£675
C21 JCH	£675
A18 JCK	£1300
B25 JCK	£875
H26 JCK	£775
G21 JCM	£675
D21 JCS	£675
B26 JCW	£675
R4 JDD	£675
S15 JDE	£675
A22 JDE	£675
E21 JDH	£675
G21 JDH	£675
JDJ 256	£875
G21 JDM	£675
H21 JDP	£675
A24 JDP	£675
D25 JDS	£675
P8 JED	£1100
R5 JEE	£975
A21 JEE	£675
J15 JEF	£1200
F21 JEF	£1300
R21 JEF	£675
A22 JEF	£1200
70 JEF	£4500
H21 JEH	£675
C21 JEL	£675
C22 JEM	£875
E22 JEM	£675
D26 JEM	£875
R10 JEN	£1900
E21 JEN	£1800
S321 JEN	£1100
A11 JEP	£675
D21 JEP	£675
A16 JER	£675
T16 JER	£675
A22 JES	£1200
C22 JES	£1100
D22 JES	£975
JF 1581	£2900
JG 5102	£2700
E8 JGH	£675
A24 JGR	£675
8735 JH	£2700
JH 9181	£3200
F9 JHD	£675
H21 JHN	£675
P5 JHW	£675
J8 JHW	£875
699 JI	£4800
JIB 181	£1100
JIL 4221	£675
G23 JJB	£675
E7 JJD	£975
A26 JJH	£675
A23 JJR	£675
H4 JJS	£1500
A24 JJS	£675
N77 JJW	£675
E25 JKE	£775
G21 JLB	£675
C24 JLB	£675
C21 JLH	£675
C21 JLM	£675
F26 JLP	£675
G21 JLR	£675
H24 JLR	£675
10 JLT	£6700
JM 1808	£2600
JM 8099	£2400
A23 JMA	£675
D21 JMB	£675
G26 JMB	£675
C23 JMC	£1300
L29 JMC	£1100
G21 JMD	£675
A23 JMD	£675
64 JMD	£4600
C21 JME	£675
A23 JME	£675
L5 JMG	£875
G14 JMH	£775
H21 JML	£675
X8 JMM	£1300
R11 JMM	£975
G21 JMM	£675
W9 JMP	£975
A24 JMR	£675
B21 JMS	£675
C23 JMS	£675
A26 JMT	£675
L2 JMW	£1200
V2 JMW	£1300
R18 JMW	£675
A24 JMW	£675
A26 JNS	£675
A21 JOC	£675
C7 JOD	£1600
B17 JOE	£1700
D24 JOE	£1500
E24 JOE	£1400
A21 JOL	£675
J17 JON	£2300
E21 JON	£1500
H21 JON	£1400
A23 JON	£1400
G23 JON	£1200
D24 JON	£1300
W31 JON	£875
K60 JON	£975
K100 JON	£775
S999 JON	£875
F21 JOR	£675
C24 JOR	£675
D24 JOR	£675
Y1 JOY	£3300
C16 JOY	£675
K19 JOY	£675
J24 JOY	£975
G21 JPB	£675
G23 JPH	£675
A24 JPM	£675
E23 JPW	£775
B26 JPW	£675
E21 JRB	£875
G23 JRB	£675
A23 JRC	£675
C23 JRC	£675
A9 JRG	£875
D21 JRG	£675
C23 JRG	£675
H9 JRH	£1700
A24 JRM	£675
709 JRR	£1500
S26 JRS	£675
D21 JRW	£675
T7 JSA	£675
A21 JSC	£675
J10 JSD	£775
E21 JSD	£675
H21 JSG	£675
H21 JSH	£675
D8 JSM	£1500
L21 JSM	£675
J44 JSM	£875
B5 JSP	£675
B21 JSP	£675
D21 JSR	£675
A24 JSR	£675
D26 JSS	£675
K26 JSS	£675
H21 JST	£675
A24 JST	£675
JSU 450	£675
D21 JSW	£675
P7 JUD	£1300
590 JWC	£1500
Y9 KAM	£1700
A26 KAM	£875
N6 KAR	£1200
J22 KAT	£875
A25 KAT	£975
C21 KAY	£1200
H21 KAY	£1100
A24 KAY	£1300
J29 KAY	£775
KAZ 663	£1200
KAZ 9777	£675
KDN 563	£875
KEC 125	£1100
C21 KEL	£1300
L10 KEN	£875
T21 KEN	£1200
A22 KEN	£1300
D22 KEN	£1100
G21 KER	£975
Y12 KEV	£1300
G21 KEV	£1400
E22 KEV	£1200
A24 KEV	£1300
K80 KEV	£1200
N99 KEV	£1100
B3 KEW	£975
A2 KGB	£1400
W8 KJH	£1500
V3 KJP	£1100
L8 KJS	£875
F4 KJW	£1200
7495 KK	£1900
444 KL	£6300
K21 KLY	£775
5663 KM	£1900
L8 KMR	£975
5577 KO	£1500
1306 KR	£1400
R6 KTY	£1300
A15 LAD	£875
258 LAF	£1900
E22 LAN	£1200
C25 LAN	£1300
H25 LAN	£1100
Y3 LAU	£1600
A25 LAU	£1300
E21 LAW	£1300
G21 LAW	£1400
D24 LAW	£1300
J24 LAW	£1400
S66 LAW	£1500
A25 LDO	£975
D23 LEA	£1100
C25 LEA	£1200
A24 LEC	£1700
D21 LEE	£1900
E21 LEE	£1500
G21 LEE	£1700
A24 LEE	£1600
LEG 155	£2300
C23 LEM	£875
Y1 LEN	£1900
N5 LEN	£1700
L21 LEN	£1100
A23 LEN	£875
G23 LEN	£1400
E24 LEN	£1600
V31 LEN	£975
G21 LER	£975
R2 LES	£1700
P5 LES	£1600
N12 LES	£1300
E21 LES	£1300
H21 LES	£1200
A22 LES	£1100
G24 LES	£1200
J24 LES	£975
S28 LES	£1300
J800 LES	£875
C26 LEX	£775
LFB 428	£1300
E23 LFC	£775
325 LKR	£675
A25 LLA	£1300
D25 LLA	£875
E22 LLY	£1200
G24 LLY	£875
A25 LLY	£1400
A24 LOR	£775
G16 LOU	£1600
A26 LOU	£1700
P31 LOU	£1500
J121 LOU	£1100
T8 LOW	£1900
G21 LOW	£1500
LRT 657	£1500
A26 LSA	£875
E26 LSA	£975
7785 LV	£1100
G4 LXY	£2700
A21 LYN	£2100
B21 LYN	£1300
C21 LYN	£1800
D21 LYN	£1600
F21 LYN	£1700
H21 LYN	£1300
G23 LYN	£1500
LYN 798X	£975
MAC 14L	£2400
R23 MAD	£1100
A25 MAD	£1500
C25 MAD	£1300
D26 MAD	£1300
G19 MAG	£1500
MAG 61M	£2300
V99 MAG	£1300
C20 MAL	£1500
D21 MAL	£1300
G21 MAL	£1100
H21 MAL	£1100
P88 MAL	£1400
G21 MAR	£975
J21 MAR	£1100
E22 MAR	£975
B23 MAR	£1100
C23 MAR	£1100
A26 MAS	£775
L6 MAT	£2700
C15 MAT	£1900
E22 MAT	£1700
B23 MAT	£1600
W10 MAX	£2700
D21 MAX	£1800
B11 MAY	£1300
C21 MAY	£1100
D21 MAY	£1200
G21 MAY	£1200
A24 MAY	£1300
MB 517	£9500
3115 MC	£3100
A21 MCA	£1200
B21 MCA	£975
D21 MCA	£1200
S111 MCA	£1200
C21 MCB	£875
S22 MCC	£875
G26 MCC	£775
G26 MCD	£775
D21 MCH	£875
B23 MCK	£875
M66 MCK	£875
R8 MCN	£1500
A24 MCN	£875
7780 MD	£2100
MDW 855	£1600
D26 MEG	£1200
H26 MEG	£1400
C44 MEG	£1600
D21 MEL	£1700
G23 MEL	£1500
K500 MEL	£1100
V777 MEL	£1300
C21 MER	£875
A24 MET	£1300
D9 MEW	£875
R9 MFS	£875
P9 MGB	£775
R1 MGF	£1200
C4 MGH	£1300
MIL 6299	£875
D21 MJB	£1200
G21 MJB	£1100
F11 MJC	£1400
S19 MJC	£1200
A25 MJC	£1300
E26 MJC	£1100
C17 MJD	£1300
L50 MJD	£1100
W55 MJH	£1100
Y29 MJS	£875
L45 MJS	£975
V321 MJS	£775
R8 MKC	£1100
A23 MKE	£875
1333 ML	£2300
A25 MLR	£875
A23 MLY	£775
A24 MMA	£1300
A25 MMO	£775
MMW 157	£1400
E24 MMY	£875
S28 MMY	£2900
F7 MOB	£875
185 MOE	£1300
A24 MOG	£875
D24 MOR	£975
A26 MOR	£775
C9 MOT	£1300
N9 MOT	£1100
D26 MOT	£775
MR 479	£7300
E3 MRS	£1900
7981 MT	£1800
MTP 89	£3700
A2 MTW	£1100
5882 MU	£875
E26 MUR	£875
681 MW	£6500
G5 MWB	£1300
2772 MY	£775
A24 MYY	£975
D21 NAH	£1100
A10 NAM	£975
B9 NAN	£1800
A25 NAN	£875
B25 NAN	£775
A7 NAR	£2300
J50 NAS	£1400
D10 NAT	£1900
H21 NAT	£1500
X44 NAV	£875
E8 NAY	£1500
A8 NDR	£1400
C25 NDY	£1200
D25 NDY	£975
557 NE	£4900
A24 NEE	£875
F21 NEL	£875
D24 NEL	£1100
D9 NJC	£1400
W11 NJC	£775
E5 NKY	£1300
H24 NKY	£975
C26 NKY	£775
H23 NLY	£775
NN 7271	£2100
C26 NON	£1300
340 NOR	£1600
A7 NSB	£775
A25 NTH	£1100
B26 OAK	£775
J5 OAN	£2100
J27 OCK	£875
N12 OEL	£1300
OFB 547	£875
C25 OKE	£875
C25 OLA	£875
D25 OLY	£775
H26 OLY	£975
A25 OME	£1200
H25 ONE	£775
W80 ONG	£975
A26 ONY	£775
D25 ORA	£775
L7 OWL	£875
A26 PAB	£775
M4 PAG	£1100
W8 PAH	£875
N2 PAM	£1300
E8 PAM	£1500
H8 PAM	£1400
F11 PAM	£1300
PAM 73R	£1200
G21 PAR	£975
B25 PAR	£775
C26 PAR	£875
J7 PAS	£1500
N1 PAT	£2700
K8 PAT	£1900
R9 PAT	£1900
C18 PAT	£1300
M19 PAT	£1500
P19 PAT	£1700
K24 PAT	£1100
J28 PAT	£1400
R31 PAT	£1700
PAT 95W	£1200
T3 PAX	£975
R2 PAY	£1100
X5 PCA	£775
9214 PE	£1300
A25 PEN	£1400
D26 PEN	£875
2969 PG	£1400
5173 PG	£1300
K5 PGB	£975
PGW 23	£2900
PGW 234	£1900
8843 PH	£1700
9256 PJ	£1300
9804 PJ	£1200
788 PJH	£2500
9481 PK	£1200
1813 PL	£1500
9799 PL	£1300
PM 527	£8500
A2 PMH	£1500
J9 PMJ	£1300
C7 PMW	£1200
M27 PMW	£775
5085 PP	£1100
6525 PP	£1300
L3 PPS	£1300
N1 PRG	£1100
X6 PRK	£975
H9 PRS	£875
PRU 684	£1300
N3 PSM	£975
B2 PTC	£975
C11 PTC	£875
7027 PU	£875
C25 PUD	£875
D26 PUG	£775
P7 PWH	£975
M11 PYE	£875
1368 R	£4500
J27 RAB	£875
C21 RAD	£875
D26 RAD	£775
N600 RAJ	£875
C26 RAM	£1300
K14 RAY	£1500
D18 RAY	£1600
A23 RAY	£1600
B24 RAY	£1600
T26 RAY	£1000
S31 RAY	£1600
M50 RAY	£1400
55 RAY	£8900
RAY 76W	£1500
J90 RAY	£1200
RB 332	£12500
561 RBF	£1300
RBO 329	£875
K1 RBW	£875
A9 RCB	£875
J2 RCD	£875
L5 RCW	£1300
1268 RD	£2100
RD 4041	£2400
A7 RDC	£1500
31 RE	£10500
675 RE	£3900
RE 1896	£1600
5304 RE	£1400
A23 REB	£775
A22 REM	£875
B24 REN	£975
G24 REN	£775
A26 REN	£875
C1 REP	£1400
B21 RES	£875
A4 RET	£875
B25 RET	£875
845 RHA	£975
RIA 65	£3900
RIA 3408	£1500
RIJ 803	£675
RJ 951	£7100
D21 RJB	£875
A25 RJC	£875
P2 RJN	£1100
T9 RJP	£1100
P24 RKR	£875
L1 RKS	£1500
RL 7024	£2500
W2 RLD	£1500
A11 RLD	£1300
B24 RLY	£975
RM 9559	£3400
RM 9807	£2800
R3 RMT	£875
A24 RMY	£875
K21 ROB	£1600
A24 ROB	£1800
L100 ROB	£1100
K121 ROB	£875
J200 ROB	£975
R40 ROD	£875
ROG 30R	£3300
N99 ROG	£775
D12 RON	£875
RON 49Y	£1500
S300 RON	£775
RON 853	£1800
W1 ROS	£3300
M16 ROS	£975
A21 ROS	£1300
C22 ROS	£875
D5 ROV	£875
ROY 8W	£2800
M12 ROY	£1500
S15 ROY	£1200
F19 ROY	£975
A21 ROY	£1600
ROY 66W	£1100
ROY 674	£1800
G322 RRY	£1300
V4 RSB	£1400
RT 3959	£3300
B26 RTY	£1100
H26 RTY	£1100
677 RU	£1600
4511 RU	£675
C21 RUS	£1500
B23 RUS	£1400
4018 RW	£1700
5321 RW	£1800
N5 RWM	£975
A26 RYN	£1100
D19 SAL	£775
A21 SAL	£1500
L31 SAL	£875
C24 SAM	£2100
H25 SAM	£1900
A26 SAM	£3100
E26 SAM	£1800
F26 SAM	£1700
B3 SAN	£2500
A23 SAN	£1200
A21 SAP	£775
G17 SAR	£975
H24 SAR	£975
C26 SAR	£975
B24 SAS	£1100
C26 SAS	£875
D26 SAV	£875
123 SBE	£1100
SBX 668	£775
710 SC	£6900
G11 SCA	£875
P7 SCM	£875
Y4 SCP	£1300
W4 SCS	£1300
Y2 SDB	£1300
H3 SDP	£775
C24 SEB	£875
A25 SEB	£975
E26 SEB	£775
G1 SEC	£1700
X5 SEL	£1900
L9 SEL	£1300
H2 SET	£1300
C24 SET	£875
A25 SET	£1100
A1 SFB	£1900
F6 SGD	£1300
R23 SHA	£2100
H26 SHA	£1300
A21 SHE	£1500
SHE 52S	£975
X5 SHR	£875
A25 SHR	£1200
E25 SHY	£875
A23 SJB	£1100
H26 SJB	£875
E10 SJC	£975
E21 SJH	£1200
D26 SJH	£975
H26 SJH	£1100
V4 SJM	£2300
H26 SJM	£1200
SJM 28S	£1300
Y66 SJM	£1100
D26 SJW	£875
S1 SKW	£1200
A24 SKY	£1100
SL 8177	£1700
SLK 1E	£3100
G7 SLK	£2100
V21 SLK	£1100
N23 SLK	£775
A23 SMC	£875
R11 SMH	£875
D16 SMJ	£775
S3 SMT	£1500
A25 SOP	£775
SP 2566	£3300
SPV 410	£775
E25 SRA	£1300
D4 SRB	£975
A26 SRC	£775
K9 SRD	£875
A25 SSS	£875
E25 SSS	£975
ST 8438	£2900
S6 STN	£875
A25 STN	£775
C26 STR	£875
D20 STS	£775
STT 347	£675
D41 STU	£1300
STY 15	£2800
H24 STY	£775
A24 SUE	£1600
F24 SUE	£1200
H24 SUE	£975
SUE 59G	£1400
SUE 79W	£1500
SUG 383	£675
C12 SUM	£975
A26 SUM	£875
D26 SUM	£775
R4 SUN	£1300
E8 SUS	£875
A2 SWH	£1300
SWM 2T	£1300
SYA 441	£775
C26 TAM	£875
B25 TAN	£975
A26 TAN	£975
C25 TAR	£875
V4 TCW	£1300
X8 TDB	£1300
R6 TDW	£775
N1 TED	£2300
V60 TED	£975
TEG 252	£975
E25 TEL	£975
TER 18S	£2500
C20 TES	£1400
9080 TF	£1500
TGL 1M	£1700
TIL 336	£675
T14 TLC	£775
G6 TMH	£775
A25 TOM	£2200
C26 TOM	£1900
B25 TON	£1300
C25 TON	£875
5316 TR	£1400
TRW 164	£1400
TS 5840	£2300
G4 TUG	£975
B12 TUG	£775
K15 TVN	£875
X50 TVR	£2500
TWP 941	£1100
UAR 196	£675
1895 UE	£675
ULL 871	£675
UN 1444	£1100
UPE 885	£675
B25 URK	£775
S3 VAL	£1900
L5 VAL	£1500
N11 VAL	£1300
C14 VAL	£875
A23 VAN	£1100
E23 VAN	£1400
VE 6787	£1500
VGX 126	£675
5714 VM	£1700
544 VPB	£675
5847 VU	£875
A25 WAL	£875
E23 WAR	£975
615 WAR	£1700
B10 WAT	£875
D24 WAT	£875
WC 77	£8500
1947 WD	£1700
8649 WD	£1400
16 WE	£11000
B21 WEB	£1300
A26 WEB	£1400
C26 WEB	£1300
D26 WEB	£1400
G26 WEB	£1300
WG 3646	£1100
A21 WHU	£975
WIL 370	£1400
WIL 2777	£675
WIL 8285	£675
S1 WJH	£1100
E8 WJW	£1300
C26 WRD	£875
W2 WRX	£1100
84 WS	£12500
WS 950	£6500
WSD 913	£975
249 WTW	£775
XDD 85	£1500
469 XHY	£875
6051 XJ	£675
XLB 38	£1700
YB 2063	£2500
YBP 844	£775
7282 YZ	£975

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